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## The Three Spaniards.

BY GEORGE WALKER.

### CHAPTER I.

Dark were his brows, and gloomy to the sight like  
clouds—  
His eyes like meteors of the night.—*Ossian.*

THE Duke d'Alcantara gave a splendid entertainment at his palace in Madrid, on occasion of a public exhibition, to which all the nobility and gentry were invited, in the true spirit of Castilian magnificence and hospitality. Madrid scarcely before had witnessed so great an assemblage of beauty; and no person of note was absent.

The night was beautiful and mild, such as the spring produces when warming into summer, and the gentle airs that passed over a delightful garden, wafted a thousand perfumes through the gauze lattices which surrounded the large saloon where the dancers were performing. The brilliance of dress alone amidst the blaze of tapers; and large Venetian mirrors reflected and multiplied the various groups, animated with every changing motion, with a sort of magic elegance; while the lively music of the orchestra awakened joy, and gave birth to pleasure in the coldest heart.

In the midst of this festivity, a stranger entered, conducting a young lady, whose modesty appeared to shrink from the inquiring gaze of so numerous an assembly. The stranger appeared a man of near sixty, unbent by the pressure of time; his features were darkened by a heavy gloom which hung upon his brow. No smile illuminated his countenance as he entered the temple of gayety; and while he walked solemnly forward to the upper end, every eye bent upon him and every tongue inquired who he could be.

The young Marquis de los Velos was conversing with the Marquis Albert de Denia, when these interesting strangers entered. The Marquis of Denia started and turned pale as the strangers advanced; but recovering himself, he attended with a smile to the observation of his friend.

"What a charming lady!" said the Marquis de los Velos; "do you observe the elegance of her form, the grace of her manner and the modesty expressed in blushes on her countenance?"

"My dear Antonio," replied the marquis, "do you pretend so much skill in female charms, as to form a judgment at this distance, and from a side view of the lady? Her veil half conceals her face, and you can but guess at what remains unseen."

The lady, as if she had overheard this discourse, and was willing to comply with the curiosity of the gentlemen, turned her veil aside, and stealing a timid glance round the company, her eyes rested a moment on the two friends, and a visible confusion betrayed some secret emotion.

"Now, my friend," said the Marquis de los Velos, "now are you satisfied with my judgment? What expressive eyes, what sensibility of soul do they betray. Did you mark that charming smile, when her eyes turned upon me? What tenderness did it not speak?"

"I know not," replied the marquis, coolly, "what

intelligence there may be between you; for me, I did not mark the smile you mention."

"Ha! ha!" returned Antonio, laughing, "you are jealous, marquis. But observe, I speak first for her favor."

"It is what I shall not dispute with you," replied the Marquis of Denia, with a serious air; "she is, I believe, already engaged."

"Engaged, now?" cried Antonio, with emotion. "Tell me to whom, and I will instantly dispatch him."

"Your intentions are excellent," replied the marquis, preserving his gravity; "but your willingness to fight for the lady will not be rewarded; your

cavalier in this scene of joy; his countenance is sufficient to damp the evening's entertainment." "You torture me," exclaimed Antonio. "Why do you trifle with me thus?" "I trifle with you!" replied the marquis; "my dear friend, you trifle with yourself. Go and select some lively partner, and think no more of a stranger whom you have now seen for the first time, and whom it is more than probable you will never see again." "Do they leave Madrid then so soon?—but I will follow them." "I think not," returned the Marquis; "she may remain in Madrid, and yet be concealed from your sight." "Ha!" exclaimed Antonio, "now I begin to suspect! they are going to seclude her in a convent. Is this the rival of which you told me?"

"You have guessed but too truly," answered his friend. "This is what I am but now informed; but I know so well the temper and disposition of Don Cevaro Padilla, that I have no reason to doubt the truth."

"But, surely," said Antonio, "were I to offer my hand, my rank, my titles, my domains, they would not be rejected." "I fear they would," answered the marquis, with a deep sigh; "you know not this man; his countenance is but a dark reflection of a blacker heart. He is a man in whose mind some terrible crime is perpetually preying." "But what is that crime?" demanded Antonio. The marquis started at the question. "What crime!" repeated he. "What crime is that which can harrow up the soul of man with fearful visions that turn tranquility into warfare, and paint upon the serene brow the deformity of tempest? But this is no place to speak on a subject such as this. Antonio, my dear friend, I have much to say to you, and will appoint a time. My introduction would be a drawback upon your welcome; if, therefore, after what I have hinted, you have any further inclination of forming any acquaintance with this imperious mortal, go, and trust your own talents."

The Marquis of Denia then withdrew precipitately, leaving Antonio in a state of doubt and perplexity. The words of his friend had been so singular, that his curiosity was much excited, and he desired more than ever to become acquainted with those persons which had been the subjects. "After all," thought he, "there was much of incoherence in his words; he seemed like a discarded lover who fears the success of a more fortunate rival. I can but meet a refusal, and surely this beautiful creature is at least worthy the hazard."

The Marquis de los Velos was yet young in life, and not easily checked in his undertakings, he immediately advanced toward the strangers, and, paying his respects to Don Padilla, requested the honor of dancing with the lady.

"She does not dance, senor," replied Padilla, coldly. "But perhaps she might be inclined for once, to partake in that amusement," said Antonio. "That is as I please," answered Don Padilla, frowning. "I hope, senor, I am not accountable to you for my actions."

The marquis attempted to apologize, directing several tender glances toward the lady, who remained silent, without daring to raise her eyes from the ground. "Do you reside at Madrid?" said the marquis. "I am now in Madrid," answered Padilla; "you are very inquisitive, young man. Do you know who I am?" "I have not at present that honor," returned De los Velos,



"LOOK IN THAT CORNER TO THE RIGHT. DO YOU NOT SEE THAT DARK BUNDLE?"

rival is infinitely superior to you—his claims are imperious, and undeniable—and no power on earth can resist them."

"You jest, marquis," replied Antonio. "I wish I could," said his friend with a sigh; "you would find what I say literally true; it is an intelligence I learned not many hours since." "Then you know her," cried Antonio, with impatience; "tell me everything about her. Who is she?—who is the rival?—where am I to find him?—introduce me to their acquaintance." "Patience!" cried the Marquis of Denia. "I dare not introduce myself. Nothing can be more strange to me than to see that gloomy



"but it is what I sincerely desire." "I must tell you," said Padilla, rather rudely, "that desire is not reciprocal. Senor, this lady will not dance."

The marquis knew not what to reply; he bit his lips with vexation, looked at the forbidding countenance of the gloomy stranger, and was inclined to walk away; but when his eyes turned upon the lady, the visible distress which touched her lovely face with sadness, riveted him to the spot; conjuring up his effrontery, he said, "I was going to have tendered you my services had you been a new-comer to the city; and should have been happy to have introduced you to the court."

"And who told you that I had designs of appearing there?" answered the unbending cavalier; "methinks you are wonderfully familiar."

"I am sorry if I intrude," said the marquis. "Then you will be so good as to immediately leave us," replied Padilla with a frown; and turning away his face, he assumed a look of severity which repelled every attempt to reply. Antonio bowed to the lady, and retired to the opposite side of the saloon, employed himself in contemplating the astonishing contrast, which the gloominess of the father, and the mildness of the daughter exhibited.

"It is impossible," said he to himself, "she can indeed be the daughter of this imperious mortal? the whole caste of her countenance is different. Her dark, savage, and inhuman;—hers is open, mild, and good; her elevated forehead is a token of the elegance of her thoughts; her arched eyebrows show the playfulness of fancy; and her eyes are tempered with that sweetness, which dissolves into a smile upon her lips. And is this lady to be condemned to the solitude of a cloister? is her beauty only to be admired by monks? is she to be the companion of cold, miserable and repining nuns? is she to waste her charms upon withering time, within the walls of an unmerited prison? Omnipotent Disposer of human events! counteract so barbarous an injustice!"

While Antonio was lost in reverie these reflections inspired, the strangers had withdrawn; and, when on looking up he beheld their absence, he started with disappointment and apprehension that he had lost them forever. He hastened towards the door, and stopping a gentleman then entering, "Which way did she go?" said he eagerly, "did you see them?" "Down the middle walk of the garden," replied the cavalier; and immediately the marquis hurried away, without waiting for further particulars.

He advanced with hasty steps along the walk; discovering by moonlight a female figure before him, which, from the shape he fancied was the lady he sought, though now she appeared with a long veil reaching nearly to the ground; his heart fluttered with delight at this unexpected opportunity, which he determined should not escape.

"Lady," said he, "this is a favor I had no hopes to receive from the hands of fortune. I have been in despair that I had no means of introduction; and now, when I least expected, I find myself for an instant happy, in being able to speak to you unobserved."

"O, senor," answered the lady, "this is too polite, you are excessively obliging."

"Not so," replied the marquis, a little surprised and greatly encouraged; "you must be aware, lady, that beauty like yours cannot be seen with indifference." "Beauty like mine," replied the lady in a self-complacent tone, "really, senor, you are the gallantest man!"

"Strange!" thought the marquis, "what a deception is a female face; who would have thought so amiable an appearance should conceal such a character." "May I be permitted," continued he, in a freer way than he had at first dared to assume; "may I be permitted again to behold those charms which that odious veil conceals, before they shall be forever secluded in a gloomy convent?" "Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the lady. "Holy Virgin, how you fright me! A convent, senor! No, I am not old enough for that I hope. No, no, believe me, I know better."

"Then I am again deceived," said Antonio to himself; "surely my friend would not have betrayed me. But is this, indeed, the lady I have been so much enamored of at first view?—am I not deceiving myself?" "If," said he, "you are not bent upon entering a convent, why, lady, do you thus conceal your charms? or is it in mercy to mankind?"

"O, I have a great deal of mercy in my nature," replied she; "but you gay cavaliers never make half so many compliments as when our veils hide us from your curiosity. Beauty is always best when it is fancied, senor."

"But yours is no fancied beauty, lady; permit me to remove this drapery, and contemplate the reality. Heavens!" involuntarily exclaimed he, on beholding the haggard visage of an old lady, who had long since been the jest of half Madrid, for an affectation of manners and dress to which she had no pretensions. Antonio was too much confounded at his mistake and loss of time, to be polite; and the lady turned angrily away, railing on the ill-breeding of the present age.

The marquis was too much untuned to be in harmony with pleasure; he sauntered along the walks of the garden; musing on the strange character of Don Padilla; and encouraging a hope, that however singular the behavior of his friend, he would be able to learn sufficient from him at least, to introduce himself at the residence of the strangers.

He advanced nearer the saloon, where the laugh of hilarity and the notes of joy sounded upon his ear; producing a sensation, which he had never before felt in its full force; the stillness of the gardens increasing the contrast.

The pale moon scattered its silver rays upon the foliage; amongst which scarcely a zephyr was heard to interrupt the silence of nature. The birds had hung their heads beneath their wings, and stillness reigned

around—when he was suddenly alarmed by repeated screams, and a burst of confusion mingled with cries of distress.

He hastened to discover the occasion of the tumult; when he perceived one of the lattices in flames, and at once understood the disaster that had happened. Ever alive to relieve the distressed, he hastened to the saloon, where so much confusion reigned, that every one retarded the other, and themselves, by pressing to be first. With a strong arm he tore down one of the window frames which reached to the ground, and forcing his way in, found the mischief not half so extensive as he had feared—the fire having only taken hold on some ornamented scenery and the lattice frame.

He was surprised to see the Marquis of Denia busily employed in extinguishing the flame, while he had supposed him far-distant; but, as he turned round to speak to him, he distinguished the lady he had been seeking, fainting upon a sofa, unregarded by any one; each being willing, in the confusion, to take care of themselves, or those more immediately interesting to them.

Every other consideration gave way to regard for her safety. Her senses were wholly overcome with the terror she had suffered; and, raising her in his arms, he endeavored to press through the crowd, fearful that every moment might be too late, the heat and smoke being excessive, though the danger of the fire was over. It was impossible to make way through the tumult, many of the ladies being in a similar state; and he had to remain in the most agonizing suspense till the Marquis of Denia came to his assistance. Between them they supported the unconscious maid into the garden, where the sudden change of air awoke her to recollection.

"Ah! cavalier," said she, in a tone of deepest softness, as she fixed her eyes upon Denia, "is it to you I owe this obligation? But where is my father?"

"Don Padilla," replied the marquis, "was not in the room when the accident happened; he is not concerned on his account, Almira, depend on his safety. But why are you in Madrid, when I had reason to believe you so many leagues distant? and how is your sister?"

The Marquis de los Velos had till now sat upon a bench supporting the lady with his arms, and gazing upon her face with a countenance expressive of hope and despair; but suddenly starting at this address of his friend, he felt a pang of jealousy cross his heart.

"How is this, marquis?" said he—"do you deal treacherously?—are you so well acquainted with this lady?"

"Is this cavalier your friend?" said she, turning her fine eyes upon Antonio, and speaking to the marquis.

"That is as he behaves," answered Denia, with a smile. "He is apt to be very passionate, senora; and he is now angry that I should share with him the pleasure of having rescued you from the tumult."

"Confusion!" muttered Antonio, while he looked first upon one and then on the other, unable to determine how much he should believe.

"Pardon me, senor," said Almira, turning to him, "if I omitted you in my thanks to your friend; but, indeed, I am so confused that—"

Her embarrassment prevented her finishing the words she intended, and Albert de Denia, to relieve her, went on:

"This, Lady Almira, is the Marquis Antonio de los Velos, a cavalier, who, since he has formed an attachment to a strange lady, has lost the use of his understanding, and—"

"Forbear, I beg," cried Antonio, impatiently; "this is trifling beyond sufferance." Then turning to Almira—"Since," said he, "I have been so fortunate as to have again the pleasure of seeing you, when my hopes were almost extinguished, will you have the goodness to say when and where I may inquire after your health, which I very much fear will suffer from this night's surprise."

"At present," said Almira, in a low voice, "I am with my father at the palace of the Count Potenza; but I feel myself so much recovered that I hope I shall find no further ill effects. I confess I was very much terrified when I fancied the whole saloon was in flames."

"What a contrast does the present moment afford," said Antonio, pointing to the saloon (where all was silent, and a solitary taper alone lighted, in the place of a thousand that had lately blazed). "Not an hour since, and the whole was a scene of the most splendid brilliance and joy; no mind presaged the sudden event that was to overthrow the entertainment in terror and confusion; so in real life, we enjoy ourselves upon the brink of a precipice."

Almira shuddered—a deep sigh acknowledged the truth—and looking round, she perceived the Marquis of Denia had left them. Antonio felt obliged for this action of his friend. He hesitated a moment and then said: "Can it be true, lady, that you have chosen to retreat from the world, at an age when you are but scarcely entered into it?"

"And should such a choice surprise?" answered Almira, "is it not necessary, if I would avoid the application of what you have just spoken, I know but little of the world; yet from that little I have learned the transience of human happiness, and have seen, that when we fancied ourselves most certain of pleasure, we have been nearest distress."

"And have you known sorrow?" said Antonio, tenderly, taking her hand. "Hard must have been the heart that could have given grief to such a subject! But do not forget that to the world we have some duties that claim us from ourselves, and which are inimical to monastic seclusion."

"True, most true," answered Almira with a sigh. "But the first duty of a daughter is obedience, and I must obey the commands of my father."

The last word was scarcely pronounced, when her voice dropped in silence, and the figure of Don Padilla stood before them.

"Where have you been?" said he sternly. "Hail—follow me, daughter." Then seizing the hand of the trembling maid, he stalked indignantly away, without deigning to notice Antonio.

"Strange!" thought the marquis—"What a monster to use with such severity a lady whom I would gladly protect in my arms; and who, if my judgment is clear, is exactly the companion I should wish to share my idle hours, and the bounties which Heaven, through the means of my ancestors, has bestowed upon me."

The company had some time left the gardens; and finding it late he departed, intending to call upon his friend early in the morning for an explanation of several sentences he could not understand; and which, by turns, gave birth to jealousy, curiosity, and doubt. He imputed to the incomprehensible character of the marquis, who was often remarked by his friends, as inconsistent in his actions and expressions; sometimes overwhelmed with impenetrable sadness, and at others mingling with the gayest company.

As Antonio passed along the streets which were now solitary and forsaken, he perceived two men in close conversation standing at a corner; he made little doubt of their being robbers, as he could perceive them looking round while they spoke with apparent anxiety. Being on the dark side of the way, and the moon shining bright, he had an opportunity of observing them unseen—he paused to reflect, whether he should watch them, or give the alarm to the guard. While he considered, a third person joined them, and, after a few words, they crossed the street, and began to move quickly towards the place where Antonio stood. Antonio doubted not but he was discovered; and clapping his hand upon his sword, stood upon his guard.

The first person who came near immediately perceived him, and said, in a low voice, "Antonio de los Velos, follow me."

"For what purpose?" demanded Antonio, "and whither?" "For my pleasure, and where I please," answered the other, in a rough voice.

"That must be as I please too," said Antonio drawing. "You may perhaps think your numbers will frighten me—come on!"

"Ha! ha!" cried the stranger, laughing: "well, you man of metal." And Antonio immediately knew the voice of his friend.

"You again!" cried he; "you are wrapped in mystery to-night: but who are these in your train?"

"Your servant and mine," replied the marquis. "When I first quitted the room, I put them upon the scent to find the dwelling of Don Padilla, not having any expectation we should have had an opportunity of discovering it ourselves; and now, if you are not inclined to sleep we will go to my palace."

"You are a clever fellow at intrigue," said Antonio; "but tell me, marquis, and on honor, if all this trouble is on mine, or your own account?"

"Can you not be contented with the benefit of the event, without inquiring the motive?" returned Albert. "It was both; both, my dear Antonio; bury your suspicions, and remember I am your friend."

They were not long before they arrived at the marquis de Denia's; where, having taken some refreshment, and provided a couple of bottles of wine, the marquis dismissed the servants to bed and carefully locked the door.

"You make use of great precaution," said Antonio, looking round him. "Is it treason we are going to debate upon?"

"No," answered Albert, solemnly, "it is not treason; yet it is not fit for every mortal ear; the mysteries of fate are unsearchable; and we know not the manner in which the darkest deeds meet the light."

"Deeds of what?" said Antonio, gazing with surprise upon his friend. "What is it you say? what has this to do with Almira?"

"Much, perhaps too much," said the marquis, drawing his chair to the table. "But now, Antonio, look at the hand of that clock; it is upon the hour of one; at this dread hour of night promise me secrecy. Swear to me!"

"But where there is no crime, can secrecy be necessary?" observed Antonio, "and where there is a crime, secrecy becomes a fault. You are strangely altered within these few minutes, marquis."

"I am," replied Albert; "my levity is always assumed. I have at my heart a corroding poison that chills the moments of my existence, and dashes from me the cup of pleasure, when I attempt to raise it to my lips. I once had a friend, the confidant of my soul—but he is now lost me, and I would take you in his place."

"You are in love then!" exclaimed Antonio, with a languid smile. "I see where this will end." "I am in love," replied the marquis, emphatically; "but not, as you imagine, with Almira; therefore your heart may rest. Did you ever hear that I could be guilty of a dishonorable act? The secret that I would trust you with, has little relation to anything your warmest fancy can suggest. Will you promise me, then?"

"I heartily acknowledge, I never knew you guilty of a meanness," replied Antonio. "To say the truth, could such a suspicion have had being in my mind, you had never called me friend; yet, at the same time, this ceremony seems as though you doubted me. But, to humor you, I swear—by the holy mass, never will I, without your own consent, reveal what you shall now disclose!"

"Tis enough, said the marquis, taking his hand. "From this moment let there be the most unlimited confidence between us. Prepare yourself to give credit to things which require your faith; and remember, that it is the Marquis Albert de Denia who relates them."



He paused; and looking solemnly round the room, leaned his arm upon the table, and thus began:

## CHAPTER II.

Ye unknown Pow'rs which hover around mankind,  
Guard us when Fate sits brooding in the wind.

"You must remember Fernando de Coello, who was my particular friend from our earliest youth; his family is noble, and, I believe, he is a"—

"He is my first cousin," said Antonio; "and his sudden death gave me considerable grief."

"You surprise me," cried the marquis; "tell me how? when did you receive this information?"

"I can say nothing for certain," answered Antonio; "my information reaches merely to the report, that he was slain in battle with the Moors."

"Report is a common liar," said the marquis; "I am glad to find you are not better informed. I will now proceed. When we were extremely young we served together in the army and were rarely asunder, but when duty, or our visits to our friends in Madrid, required. This companionship in dangers, in romantic adventures, and the variety to which a soldier's life is ever liable, at once endeared us to each other, and opened our minds to that genial and genuine friendship, which, like love, renders trifles of great importance, and gives birth to that communication of fancy, heroism used to inspire."

The leisure of a camp gave our minds opportunity to trace the histories of proceeding times; and if we were not tinctured with superstition, we, at least, took delight in romance. Having been to chastise some insurgents in the provinces, we were quartered in the city of Grenada. The beauty of that charming country, and the extensive prospects from the mountains of Sierra Nevada, covered with vegetation, and crowned with eternal snow, frequently invited us to ramble.

Sometimes we climbed the heights, and gratified our senses with contemplating a region of enchantment. The hills were overspread with vines and olives; the valleys were clothed, and odoriferous with a thousand flowering shrubs, intermingled with myrtle. Thyme and lavender grew wild upon the wastes; and the golden-tinted saffron delighted the eye, amidst a profusion of flowers. The Mediterranean closed the distant prospect with its blue waves, over which the adventurous bark was frequently seen to glide, like a dark spot on its pellucid surface.

Our duty at the castle of Alkambra was trifling, not being a part of the garrison; and we consequently had much time upon our hands to indulge our propensity for rambling. On one of those occasions we walked beyond the city to a considerable distance, following the winding banks of the Darro, amused with the variety of scenery it presented, when we arrived at a grove of tall chestnut trees we had never visited before. The coolness of the shade invited us to rest, and we sat down on the flowery bank (which sloped to the river), regarding the transparent current as it passed, and discoursing on those adventures of which, as soldiers, we had many to recount.

While we admired the beauty of the fertile country, which now presented to our sight, the turrets of several ruined buildings, recalled to us the distress which the Moors had suffered, when driven from the country of their birth, and the lands of their cultivation, by an edict at once cruel and impolitic; and which had converted in a few months, this whole province into a howling waste, filled it with rapine and slaughter, torn husbands from their wives, and children from their parents, rent asunder the bands of friendship and civil union, and banished more than nine hundred thousand people to the deserts of Africa.

While we were discoursing on this subject, and expressing our indignation at its folly, we perceived a small boat floating down the stream, apparently without a guide; and, as the eddy of the waves set it toward the shore where we sat, it could not but excite our attention.

"Now for a famous adventure of knight errantry," said Fernando; "who knows but some redoubtable magician has sent this enchanted boat to convey us to some terrible castle, where a fair lady awaits the event of our prowess, to be delivered from the tyrant of the Iron hand."

I smiled at this conceit, and, in the thought of the moment, replied, "Well, sir knight, if your courage be undaunted, and you dare brave the perils of the adventure, I require you, on the faith of a knight good and true, to accompany me in the achievement of this adventure."

"Most willingly, sir knight; be it unto life or unto death, I will accomplish the exploit," cried Fernando, with humor, leaping into the boat, which the waves had driven close upon the bank.

I did not remain behind—and we put off into the middle of the current.

The vessel, of which we had thus taken possession, was a small pleasure boat, and seemed to have drifted from its mooring, there being only one oar on board, which served merely to guide, without advancing our progress; an accident which added to our amusement, as it seemed we were wholly to depend upon chance. A bottle of excellent brandy, and some Italian sweetmeats stored our bark; which we received as an intimation that modern knights were not expected to live upon love and air, like ancient heroes. The day being extremely fine, we took much pleasure in our adventure; we continued our voyage, slowly winding amongst the romantic scenery, which now appeared level with the water, and now overhung the liquid mirrors which inverted and reflected the foliage in lengthened and darkened groves.

We beheld the ruins of several Moorish palaces and castles at a distance, and passed a few vessels laden with grain and oil. Our bark moved insensibly along

gliding beneath the dark cliffs, which were crowned with evergreen laurels. The spires of Grenada were lost far behind us; and it was not till towards evening we remembered the necessity of our return.

With some difficulty we put the boat round, and we then found the truth of that proverb, which tells us—it is easiest to swim with the stream. We were at a considerable distance from the city, and, to mend our situation, the wind began to blow pretty strong.

It was now we began to repent our adventure. We found it impossible to make way against the stream with only one oar; and we were under the necessity of putting round again, with an intention to land at the first place where there appeared any probability of procuring a conveyance back to Grenada.

The sun, meanwhile, slowly declined in majestic but sullen grandeur. Deep black clouds heavily rose from the far distant ocean, through which his purple beams seemed to break with difficulty, tingling their borders with flame; the mountain and forests caught the fervid reflection, glowing with a partial and transient luster. The wind hurried us along; and the waves began to rise, with an eddy that was far from pleasant to such unskillful mariners in an open boat.

"This is likely to be no comfortable adventure," said Fernando; "I would we had remained on known ground, and not trusted ourselves we know not where. If we should chance to fall upon any of those straggling parties of insurgents which still remain lurking in secret places, it may not be so pleasant."

I was not more satisfied with our situation; but, taking up the brandy, "Come, my friend," said I, "this is an enchanted liquor, furnished by our invisible guide for the banishment of care." Having refreshed ourselves with the remains of the sweetmeats, we sat still, looking out anxiously for some place of shelter, and watching the quick approach of night. The sun was not long sunk beneath the horizon, before the rain began in large drops to patter on the surface of the water. We would then willingly have put on shore, content with the shelter of the trees, but here it was so broken and rocky, that we durst not venture the slight vessel too near, lest it might be bulged by the force of the wind and stream, which drove us forward at a rapid rate.

In half an hour we perceived, through the gloom that enveloped us, the ruins of a Moorish castle, which projected boldly to the water's edge. The main tower, which was circular, appeared nearly complete, but the other parts of the building presented only an extensive mass of ruins, spreading over a large space of ground.

We were by this time nearly wet through, notwithstanding a piece of old sail cloth, which we had contrived to spread over us. The storm had not, however, yet arisen to its height—the great body of clouds moving on very heavily, and we endeavored to incline the boat towards this ruin, which might, at least, shelter us from its fury. We found ourselves unexpectedly in a strong current, which set forcibly towards the foot of the tower; and we began to be apprehensive it might wreck us on the rocks.

"This is truly astonishing, marquis," said Fernando; "what are we now to think of the adventure?"

"There wants nothing but a twinkling taper from some of the loop-holes, a guardian dragon, and a draw-bridge," returned I, "to complete it. But, seriously, I wish we were well over the night. That pile bears upon it the marks of violence, and no doubt its dark recesses are a retreat to some disaffected party."

"Of them I have no fear," replied Fernando; "we have each of us a sword that has been tried, and done service. I am resolved to finish the adventure. We have hitherto been conducted in a very singular way; and though, my friend, we may smile at enchantment, and magic, and spells, yet there are mysteries in nature with which we are unacquainted. I myself—"

He suddenly checked himself at these words, and I could not avoid smiling at his manner, which I imputed to the concurrence of circumstances, such as might have generated superstition in any man.

The night, from the blackness of the clouds, was profoundly dark; and we remained a few moments in silence.

"Now," said he, "will you believe? the boat has fixed upon the stairs which lead from the water edge up the rock to the castle. What can this mean?"

"Mean!" replied I, "it means nothing extraordinary. Do you not perceive, that the current we are fallen into is caused by the water running into the moat which surrounds the building? let us endeavor to make it fast and try to find a shelter."

Fernando remained silent, gazing upon the tower, which appeared as if blackened by fire, and awfully gloomy through the storm; being only distinctly visible when the flashes of lightning reflected against its sides. After groping some time with the oar, I discovered a ring, to which we fastened the boat, and ascended the stone steps, but in the solid rock: a dozen brought us to the landing. The lightning served us for a guide: distinguishing a small porch entire, within which we found the Postern gate broken down, leading into the tower.

Within the deepest darkness prevailed; and it was at the utmost hazard we ventured to advance, arm in arm, with our swords extended before us, to avoid, if possible, running against any projection, or falling down some flight of steps. In this manner we advanced along a narrow passage, till we were checked by a stair that we judged wound up to the higher apartments. After a moment's consideration, we resolved to hazard the event; curiosity impelling us onward.

The place being narrow, I advanced first, cautiously proceeding, when, on a sudden I found myself violently seized by the arm; and Fernando in a low voice, demanded if I heard nothing?

"Death!" cried I, "what do you hear? what, or who have you suffered to pass?" At the same time I en-

deavored to release my arm from the grasp of I knew not what; but which, to my imagination, seemed to hold me stronger than a dozen men.

"Nothing has passed," replied Fernando; "It is I who have hold on your arm: Heavens, how you tremble? Did not you hear a noise?"

"You," said I, checking my vexation and inclination to laugh: "on my word, I thought myself in the paws of some fiend; it is in vain to deny it. But what do you hear? Hark!—surely I heard a hollow murmuring sound! We had better retreat and brave the storm."

"No," replied Fernando, "no! we will either advance or perish." I felt assured at this confidence, and ashamed of my own fears. "Come on then," said I, "my brave fellow! we have before this entered a breach together, and shall we be afraid because it is dark and the wind sighs along the passages?"

This flight of stairs led to a landing, which, opening wide, we fancied ourselves in some chamber, and paused while the thunder rolled over us, and shook the building to its base.

The lightning that flashed through the long, narrow loop-holes allowed us to distinguish a few objects, which were seen for a moment and then involved in tenfold darkness. No furniture appeared in the room, except a broken bench, the head of a rusty pike, and a Moorish turban.

We sat down upon the bench, leaning upon our swords, and watching more attentively than if surrounded by a hostile camp. Several times we fancied that some voice passed along the wind, which loudly sounded through the avenues, now howling along the passages, and then dying away in gentle sighings. Amidst the intermission of the thunder, we heard the lashings of the waves against the shore, and the rain poured down in rushing torrents.

A vivid flash of lightning, which seemed to sleep upon the floor, for a few moments wholly illuminated the chamber; and the succeeding flashes occurred with such quick succession, that a constant blaze filled the chamber.

"What is that?" said Fernando, in a whisper.

"Where?" demanded I.

"Look in that corner to the right, Albert," said he. "Do you not see that dark bundle? It is either a murdered traveler, or some person wrapped in a cloak. Most probably some robber," whispered he.

"I see it," replied I, and the next instant the lightning again left us in total darkness. "Let us plunge our swords into him while he sleeps," added I, in a low voice; "we must prevent him doing us a mischief in the dark."

"Not so neither," whispered Fernando, "it may be some innocent stranger; at most, he is but one to two; let us advance cautiously, examine him before he shall awake and alarm his comrades, if he has any."

We proceeded gently across the floor, which creaked beneath our feet. I stooped down, and took hold of the dark wrapper. A burst of thunder, which rolled and broke over the roof with a tremendous crash, caused me to start away with involuntary horror.

"Perhaps," said Fernando, in a low solemn voice, "it is for me this strange business is reserved—I will examine the bundle." He traced cautiously over it, to discover if it owned a human shape, and pressing his hand upon it, it made no other resistance than a bundle of cloth, and he became satisfied it was no human being. It was bound round with a leathern belt, which he cut through with his sword, and shaking it by the middle, something fell heavy upon the ground and a piece of metal rolled to a distance. "Hush!" said he, "I thought I heard a sound." "Very probably," said I; "tis most likely the robbers to whom this booty belongs, and our curiosity will be rewarded." I stepped a little on one side to prepare for an attack, the wind being so loud that I frequently fancied voices and footsteps were approaching; my foot hit against something hard, and stooping down, I found it to be a dagger without a case. I drew it through my fingers to judge of its size and shape; and from its roughness, fancied it to be rusty.

"Yes," said Fernando, with a sigh so deep, that it almost amounted to a groan; "no doubt it is rusty—dipped in the blood of some innocent, by the hand of rapine or revenge; give it me—I will preserve it." I could not but admire the strange alteration he had undergone within these few hours; and though he appeared more forward and hardy than myself, I could not but fancy it was excess of fear, which I had often seen produce the greatest show of bravery.

It was now past midnight, the storm was evidently going further, and the lightnings flashed at a distance through the horizon. "I fear," said I, "for our little bark which is most likely dashed in pieces against the rock, and we shall have some difficulty in returning to Grenada."

"That same Power," replied Fernando, "which conducted us here, can lead us back."

"And are you really of opinion, my friend," answered I, "that an invisible power did lead us to this ruined castle?" "I am most certain," said he, and paused as if musing on some distant thought.

"Then you believe in magic? you believe that intangible beings can act on corporeal substance?" "I do, I have reasons, my friend—reasons that would convince yourself."

"I would then willingly hear them," said I; "I have been your companion these five years, in toils, in hardships, and in dangers, and you never informed me of this."

"Never!" replied he gravely; "I endeavored myself to forget, but this strange adventure returns my memory strong upon me, and harrows up my imagination; I will speak low: for I am satisfied this place has inhabitants; but whether they be mortal or no, I know not." I had no mind to interrupt him, for his gravity, and the solemnity of the impenetrable darkness, conspired to raise images of horror.



Do you not remember, nine months ago, upon this very day, I entered the age of manhood; and was interrupted in our intention of keeping that event with a little feast amongst our comrades, by an order to join a party going out to forage? Do not you remember that I returned to you so pale and altered that you hardly knew me, and that I imputed the cause to a sudden illness which had seized me?"

"I remember," said I.  
"And so do I," continued he; "I shall remember it forever! Our way lay through a deep defile, overhung with gloomy cork-trees, and so intricate that we feared every moment falling into an ambuscade. The pass was so gloomy that it appeared like the twilight of evening, and not being the chief in command, I halted in the rear, to see that no stragglers remained behind. When the whole party had passed, I followed into the defile; the sound of steps behind me caused me to turn round, when I perceived another soldier, apparently lame; yet I thought he moved forward amazingly quick for a wounded man."

I was a little surprised, as I had not observed any man behind, and halted till he came up, intending to reprimand him for his negligence.

"What's the matter," cried I, "that you hang so far behind your comrades? What accident have you met with?"

"Fernando Coello," said he, in a tone like that of a dying man, "I have received a mortal blow; you alone can relieve me."

"How is that to be done, friend?" inquired I; "where are you hurt?"

"Deep, deep," said he; "my hurt is here," laying his hands upon his breast. "'Tis you alone can cure me. Promise me you will."

"Why should I promise you?" said I; "I am no surgeon, but I will see you properly taken care of." He shook his head and sighed. "You surely would not have me promise what I cannot perform."

"You can," answered he; "you alone can. You must promise, Fernando Coello: this is your birthday, and you shall promise me."

"But why? who are you?" demanded I, astonished at the familiarity of a man dressed like a common soldier.

"Who I am signifies not," returned he in an elevated voice; "such as I am may you never be. Many are my wrongs and my wounds are deep. You, you, Fernando Coello, are the man in all the earth who must redress me. Promise me that you will. Swear by the rolling orbs; by the great deeps of earth's foundations—swear!"

"You are mad," said I, alarmed at his manner; "you talk strangely."

"But I am not therefore mad," replied he; "every thing about me is strange—strange as the grave. But fate, deep and dark, terrible and eternal fate sits over your house, unless you give me this promise."

"Tell me quick then," said I, "what am I to do, the troops are proceeding and I shall be too late."

"You will be indeed too late," replied he, "if you do not resolve instantly. The fortune of your house depends on the decision of this moment. Give me your word, or die!"

I cannot describe to you how strangely I was affected; there was something so shockingly solemn in his voice, that it pierced to my inmost soul; and believing that there could be nothing very particular in promising my aid to a wounded man I replied—I grant your request; I propose to right your wrongs if I have the power, and to cure your wounds, if I have the means.

"You are mine! You are mine! You are mine!" cried he three times in a voice of exultation. "Give me your hand." I held out my hand and he took hold of it; but his touch was the touch of death, damp and clammy, and cold; it chilled my veins, creeping through them with indescribable horror. At that moment I heard the trumpet sound for a quick march, and turning round my face, I looked again and no one stood near me. I was struck with so much astonishment (for had this appearance been human, I am certain it could not have escaped me,) that, though we had a smart action with the enemy, the impression remains indelible.

"Have you never heard or seen anything of this strange apparition?" said I; "are you certain your imagination was not deluded with chimeras?" "Certain," replied he; "till the adventure of this night; I had hoped never to see or hear farther; but now I fear I shall be called on to the performance of that fatal promise; this dagger—What sound is that? I am certain I heard a step." "Some one advances," said I; "be prepared." We sat still, scarcely venturing to breathe. A slow step advanced up the stairs, and entered the chamber. It passed distinctly across the room, pausing as if to listen between every step, till it went through the opposite avenue. It was not till then Fernando acquired courage to speak. "Who knows," said he, "but this may be the wounded soldier?—yet what should he do here?"

"I rather think," said I, "that it is some assassin, or freebooter in the dark. Who goes there?" I aloud. "Who goes there?" replied a voice in the same tone. "Answer me!" cried I, "are you a friend?" "Are you a friend?" returned the voice.

"This is strange!" said Fernando in a whisper; then speaking aloud, "If you are a friend, advance!" "Advance!" returned the voice, and again all was silent. "This is most singular," observed Fernando in a whisper; "do you hear any sound of footsteps?" "None," answered I; "I did not observe which way the person went who I am certain passed us." "I will find it out!" cried Fernando aloud. "Find it out!" replied the voice.

"This is a very good-humored spirit," said I, glancing at once upon the truth; "when you speak above the common tone, the hollow pile re-echoes the sound." We then repeated aloud several sentences, admiring the effect which had so startled us; but we

could not, by this means, account for the person who had certainly crossed the chamber.

The gray line of dawning day breaking over the distant hills, we began to lose much of our apprehension, and to feel a curiosity to examine the building which had so much excited our fears. Through the narrow loop-hole, we watched the distant and gradual increase of light, dispersing the blue mists which curled over the hills; where, yet, no prominent feature could be distinguished.

When the light rendered objects perceptible, we ventured to ascend the winding stairs which led to the battlements; where we were enchanted with the beauty of the prospect. The cool fragrant air of the morning breathed over the reviving plants; whose colors by the rain of the night, were enlivened and deepened. The flowers began already to open their leaves to the coming day; and the clear sky assumed the blush which foreruns the approaching sun.

We beheld at a great distance the turrets of Grenada; and, whichever way the eye turned, the senses were delighted with a profusion of vegetation.

We were not without some apprehension of the person who had passed us in the night, as he probably was lurking in some secret part of the building, or might have joined his comrades, with intent to fall upon us with a force we should be unable to stand. Our boat we saw beneath us a wreck upon the landing place, and we descended again to our chamber to consult on our mode of proceeding.

The bundle we had half concealed in the night, now attracted our attention. On the floor, at some distance, lay a small portrait, which had fallen. Fernando took it up, and holding it to the light exclaimed: "What an admirable countenance! what expression! what tenderness! Ah! my friend, if the original lives, and I could find her, I would immediately engage for life."

"I should smile to see you in love with a picture," said I; "but how came it here?"

"How!" cried he with a look of horror. "Ah! mark, you have awakened in my breast the most cruel anguish. Surely no ruffian hand could deform so lovely a countenance—a countenance that might charm fiends into admiration."

"But she is dressed in the moorish fashion; she is, perhaps, one of those who have suffered from the edict of Philip," said I.

"Pray do not name it," replied Fernando; "the very suspicion kills me. Look at that mouth—Heavens! what an inimitable smile!—the very lips seem parting to speak a sentiment of kindness!"

I advanced, and opening the bundle, found it to consist of a moorish dress, very much spoiled with damp and time, and stained in several places with blood.

"This is not a lady's dress," said I; "it has most likely belonged to some traveler, and that is the portrait of his mistress. I do not admire this dismal looking place; it is more horrible by day than by night—murder seems written upon the walls, and violence sits upon the battlements! Let us go."

Fernando still examined the picture, which he could not enough admire; at length his attention turned upon the bundle which I was separating, and he agreed with me, that it could not have lain in so exposed a situation for the time, the fashions distinguished its form, or it would have at least, been rotten with damp; it appeared more probable that it had been brought thither by some freebooter; and was not unlikely to belong to the person we were certain had found concealment somewhere, as we noticed his ascent, but heard no more of him.

"We will endeavor to find him," said Fernando, "most likely he can give an account of this picture, and that fatal habit, stained with blood, and pierced; most likely, with this dagger."

From this little corridor two stairs presented, the one narrow and winding, leading immediately to the battlements; the other, the main staircase, to the upper rooms. All the doors had been burnt or broken down by violence, presenting a free passage over the whole tower. We ascended without difficulty, and entered the higher suit of rooms, consisting of three chambers. We looked around with suspicious care, but not the smallest vestige of an inhabitant appeared. We examined the flooring that no secret trap-door might escape us—most of these antique structures having very singular concealments. We were on the point of returning, when Fernando remarked the traces of muddy feet upon the floor, and we followed them into the second chamber, where we suddenly lost them; nor could all our skill discover any possible place of concealment or way of escape.

Tired with so fruitless a search, we returned to the first chamber, and thence to the ground floor, cautiously examining every place that promised any information, and carrying with us the garments we had found.

From the extensive pile of ruins, and many fallen columns of marble, it was easy to trace the once magnificent and extensive structure. The marks of fire were visible upon the whole; and it was probably the great solidity of the remaining tower which had rescued it from the general conflagration.

Not being able to make any further discovery, we began on foot our journey back to Grenada. I knew not what to think of the story Fernando had told me; however, though I was as certain of his veracity as though I had been myself witness of the fact, yet so long a time having passed without further intimation, induced me to fancy there must have been some deception, which the gloominess of the defile had favored; then, on the other hand, our recent adventure bore every mark of superstitious romanticity, though it might yet be more than a curious concurrence of circumstances.

At Grenada we made several inquiries concerning the Moorish castle; but gained no information relating to our adventure.

We learned that it had formerly been a palace be-

longing to a Moorish prince; that it had since descended to the family of Ferendez, and had finally been burned under the edict of Philip, as affording shelter to the resisting party.

## CHAPTER III.

Hark! the raven flaps his wing  
In the brier'd dell below;  
Hark! the death owl loud doth sing  
To the night-mares as he goes.—*Chatterton.*

FERNANDO became every day more enraptured with the portrait, visiting every place of public resort, from the church down to the lowest public walks, in hopes of meeting, if not the original, at least some figure which might distantly approach. He frequently complained to me of the cruel singularity of his fate, in not so much as knowing whether his mistress was living or dead, young or old.

I constantly ridiculed this singular whim; and, as our troops were soon to quit Grenada, I advised him to throw away the picture and the dagger, and laugh with me at the whole adventure. He became more reserved in his behavior; and I was sorry to be less troubled with his wonders and conjectures about the origin of the miniature, which he would willingly have made the constant theme of our discourse.

In about a fortnight we quitted Grenada; and after a tedious march of some days, entered the province of Andalusia. At the first village on the road, we halted with as many men as the place would receive; the rest of the party going forward.

As we entered the yard of our inn, we found a traveling fortune-teller; one of those men who sell amulets and charms, who vend amongst country peasants philtres to procure affection, and are a nuisance in every society where they are tolerated. He was mounted on a tub in the innyard, and surrounded with a gaping crowd of villagers and muleteers, who were amused with his grotesque gestures, and eager to buy his drugs.

We took our station a little on one side, admiring the simplicity of the peasants, who believed him first physician to the Emperor of China. "Is it possible," said I to Fernando, "the credulity of mankind can be so absurd, as to believe a man who by his own account, is the richest upon earth, and who yet will play more tricks than a baboon for a maravedie?"

He overheard this observation; for our figure had attracted his attention, and turning suddenly around, "Senors," said he, with a penetrating look, "I know that which you want to know. The secrets I possess no other man inherits."

Fernando immediately took this speech to himself, which, in fact, was no more than the general cant of these fellows; but the perplexity of his mind made him catch at everything that inclined towards mystery. "Let us now enter," said he, "and refresh ourselves; we will examine this man after the villagers are gone."

"Very well," answered I, "we will both have our fortunes told. The rogue has seen by our dress that we are of quality, and will make his guesses accordingly; but, in the first place—here, Host! what have you got for supper?" The host was a jolly, dark complexioned fellow, and thrusting his hands into his belt, he replied:

"Please you, my senors, it grieves me to say how bare we are at present of provisions. These doctors carry such a train with them, that everything is swept away where they come. I verily believe all the pigs and fowls in Andalusia would not stay their stomachs a fortnight; and then, as to salads, they cleared my whole garden in a night, like a swarm of locusts."

"Have you got any eggs? Can we have an omelet?" demanded Fernando. "No, senors," replied he bowing, "I have not an egg, nor any onions, nor garlic; and besides, it is not a fast day, so that we have no fish in the whole village."

"Do you know us?" cried Fernando, impatiently: "Do you know it is at your peril thus to treat the king's officers?"

"I crave your mercy," replied the host. "I am sure such worthy cavaliers cannot expect something for nothing, and if I had the superbest larder, nobody should be more heartily welcome."

"Well, well," cried I impatiently, "no prattling, it's easy to see what you are aiming at, you do not expect us to pay you. I promise you we shall not quarter on you for nothing; only stir yourself, and let us have the conjuror to supper."

"Tis done, senors, 'tis done; I always sup myself with the conjuror. I will endeavor to prevail on him to part with his share. Some of his train have been out to forage, and they never return empty. Meanwhile, senors, what do you say to a manchete, and a bottle of the right Barcelona?"

"Fetch it quickly," said Fernando, and the host instantly disappeared. We had scarcely entered into the question we proposed to put to the conjuror, when the host returned with the wine, and holding it up to the light:

"By the mass," said he, "but this is the right sort, as clear as fountain water, and as strong as aqua vite. I never uncork a bottle of this but when some of his majesty's officers honor me with a call. I'll be your taster if you please."

We were entertained with his humor, so different from the stiff and grave manner of Castilians, and we diverted ourselves with inquiring about his neighbors, and listening to half a dozen tales of village scandal. "Now, this," said he, taking his glass very familiarly, "is what I like; this tells me, senors, that you have seen the world—so have I, for that matter. The other day there came here a gruff old don, proud as a bashaw and grim as a starving wolf. Marching here and there, and saying nothing to nobody, he looked for all the world like a man going to be hanged. His servants indeed told me that he goes once a year to Grenada to



do penance for his sins. Sure enough he looked like a murderer."

"A murderer!" repeated Fernando. "Did you say he was a murderer?"

"No, cavalier," replied the host, "I said he looked like one (and I have seen murderers in Italy); but a man is not always to be taken by his looks; or else, señor, under favor, we should some of us be in as bad a case as Don Grim."

"You make very free with your guests, I think," said I.

"Not more so than I wish them to be with me," replied he. "Why now, señors, can you guess why I took up an inn, and left my dear little native village in France, where I used to cut hair, and shorten beards? It was because I loved freedom and variety of character. An inn is more free than a palace; you do as you please, come when you choose, and go when you fancy. You meet all characters on a level; wit has liberty to show itself and modesty loses its shame."

"So indeed, it appears," cried Fernando, with impatience; "if thou ever hadst any shame, recall a little of it now, and leave us."

"There is a true shame and a false shame," continued he coolly; "the true shame is"—

"Cease this impertinence," cried I: "go, and hasten our supper."

"It will be ready before you think of it," said he. "Talking beguiles the time, and in an inn a man has a right to say what he pleases. An inn is the center of mirth, jollity, and good living. Etiquette is left at the door; and so, señors, let us finish this bottle: *Hol hol* by St. Christoval, here comes his high mightiness, first physician to the Emperor of China, corn-cutter to the Cham of Tartary, and parer of nails to the Great Mogul."

We could not avoid laughing at the humor of our host; but the doctor coming in, we prepared seriously for supper, which was not bad of the kind. Our host's wine contributed to raise our spirits, and he began to rally the doctor on his occult pretensions.

"I beg," said he, after we had supped, "that you will now put me to the proof. I have heard all your doubts, and will now endeavor to remove them. In the first place, let us have three candles." When the host quitted the room to order the lights, "Send that man away," said the doctor. "I will amuse him with some common fancies, and then you may get rid of him."

"What is your name?" inquired Fernando. "It is Almonzor, and my native country is Arabia, where the only pure knowledge of the Caballa is to be acquired. You have said that magic being contrary to the general laws of nature, it is incredible and impossible; but remember that every accident is a species of magic, with the cause of which we are unacquainted. Were I to take some grains of gunpowder, and kindle them before a company of rude Indians, would they not suppose me a companion of the infernal spirit? So then we rise to the higher system of the Caballa, or combination of natural principles, the mass of mankind stands upon the level of savages."

"Nothing can be fairer," said I; "but here comes De Tormes." The candles being brought, Almonzor amused us with several very curious experiments. In particular, he took from his traveling trunk a crystal basin, and placing it upon the table between the three candles, ranged in equal angles, he poured into a large vial of a mixed liquor, which separated in the basin into different strata, the lowermost taking the appearance of granite, above that gravel, and then clay, next slime, and on the surface water. Into this he poured an elixir, and a metallic tree began to arise, expanding gradually into branches, leaves and flowers. A few drops from a third vial caused the blossoms to fall, the leaves to wither, and the trunk to become in appearance dead.

All this, though curious, seemed within the limits of human comprehension; but it considerably raised our opinion of his ability, and having dismissed the host, we began to question him upon his powers of prescience.

"I would wish," said I, "to know what shall happen to me within the next three months?"

"You will learn," said he, gravely, after a few moments' pause, "news which you do not wish, and you will receive that which all men desire."

"And I," said Fernando, "what will happen to me?"

"Show me the palm of your hand. You will travel long before you find rest. You will be in danger of perishing by violence, which, if you escape, you may live to old age."

"But of what sort will be that violence?"

"By the sword," replied Almonzor. "You have some secret which now employs your thoughts—be aware of the consequence."

"Here," said Fernando, "here is a picture, can you tell me if that lady lives?"

Almonzor took the picture, and for some moments gazed upon it with silent surprise. "Where," cried he at length, "where did you meet with this?" Then starting up he exclaimed wildly, and with a look of horror, "Cold, cold are now those lips that once swelled as the rose of the spring, and opened as the flower to receive the morning dew. This polished forehead is no longer smooth. Time has printed his fingers upon it. Those eyes, clear as the living lusters of the heavens, are now dim as the star of twilight through the vapors of the evening. These cheeks, blooming with the health of perfect youth, are pale, and hollow, and wan. Oh, time! savage and remorseless monster! what hast thou left of all that was lovely? The daughter of health, of beauty, of excellence, is gone. Fresh victims feed thy pride and thy power. Oh! children of a moment, what are ye? Visions of twilight, whither go ye?"

While he uttered these words he strode about the room, with marks of frenzy in his eye; he paused, stamping with great agitation; he put his hand to his head in agony, and, suddenly laying the picture on the table, darted out of the room.

"What say you to this man?" inquired I: "do you think him most knave or fool?"

"I think it is very extraordinary," replied Fernando; "his knowledge is wonderful. Has he not told us what will happen? Did he not guess my secret?"

"And who could not, my friend?" returned I. "It is plain, at first sight of your countenance, that something preys upon your mind. There is no hazard in that conjecture; and as to his pretensions, I will interpret them. I am to receive news I do not wish, and to gain that which all men desire. In the first place, I do not wish to hear the death of any of my relations, yet, in so large a family, it may be a great chance if I do not; or how many things are there we do not wish to hear? Then, what does a soldier desire more than honor? and what is more likely than that I shall receive it after a successful campaign?"

"But then," said Fernando, "how does he know that I am to travel?"

"Why, are you not traveling now? Are soldiers ever at rest? He has had the goodness to tell you you are in danger of violence. I hope, when you are in a field of battle, you do not expect to die in your bed? and after you escape all these dangers (mark his sagacity) you may live to be old."

"But this picture," said my friend—"what horrors spread over his face when he saw it, and how could he tell whether the original were living or dead?"

"You observed when he took the picture how minutely he examined it? From the workmanship, the manner of the coloring, and the fashion he could guess the time it was first painted; the rest was all grimace and stage trick to astonish the senses and awaken superstition."

The host here made his appearance, and informed us that the first physician in the world was suddenly taken ill, and had retired to rest. "And so will we," replied I. "I see he is master of his trade."

In the morning, on inquiring for Almonzor, we learned that he had departed by break of day, a circumstance that staggered even Fernando, who began to feel the absurdity of cherishing an inclination for a person perhaps mouldered into dust.

We continued our route till we arrived at Tolosa, where we were to remain for further orders. We had made a long day's march through a barren country, where the heat had much incommoded us, rendering rest very desirable. The duties of our office were no sooner over, and supper finished, than we retired to our chamber. Our accommodation being here on a large scale, we preferred separate beds; and I indulged myself with the prospect of a night's repose, which rarely falls to a soldier on a march.

Fernando prevented my sleeping by frequently exclaiming: "What is it that oppresses my spirits? I am certain, Albert, some misfortune hangs over me." Twice he awoke me as I was sinking to sleep with inquiries if I was well, and expressions of fear that some accident was about to befall us. I was by no means pleased with these interruptions, which to me seemed the offspring of superstition in a mind that had given way to melancholy forebodings, and desired he would suffer me to sleep.

About the middle of the night I was alarmed by a considerable pressure upon my breast, which was so heavy that I could scarcely breathe. On opening my eyes I perceived, by the light of a lamp which burned in the room, the figure of a man leaning over me with his left hand upon my breast.

"Marquis of Denia," said he "rise!"

"I am not the Marquis de Denia," said I, "my father is yet alive." "He is dead!" said the person. "Rise, rise immediately, and make no noise."

I was astonished, as you may believe, at this address from a person I had never seen before, and though I was considerably alarmed for my own safety, I began to dress—the stranger sitting down by the bedside. "What is it you want," said I, "at this singular hour?" "Not more singular," he replied, "than the business upon which I am come. Hasten Marquis! Time wears apace! Follow me?"

"Follow you," repeated I; "to where? May I not awaken my friend?" "No," replied he; "look at me and obey me."

I started with an unknown sensation, when I distinguished by the dim twinkling lamp, that he was dressed as a common soldier—his eyes looked wildly upon me, and his countenance was the countenance of death. The story of my friend rushed upon me with conviction. This thought I, is the being whom he met in the defile; he announces my father's death, but wherefore does he visit me? I felt the dreadful necessity of obeying him, and followed his motions in silence.

I observed that his steps admitted no sound; and my terror increased when I beheld the doors open before us, and close at the waving of his hand. "What does this mean?" thought I; "am I to give credit to my senses, or do I dream?"

He led the way without speaking or looking round, till we passed the town and crossed the bridge at the end of it. I then ventured to inquire where I was to go? and to what purpose?

"Marquis of Denia, follow me," was the only answer I received; and that in a tone of voice so unusual, that I had not sufficient courage to reply.

We passed across several by-paths, and over several bridges, till I became so tired I knew not how to proceed. We at length entered a thicket that spread along the banks of a river; and after some time, came to a high embankment which was covered with thick and almost impenetrable trees, hanging over the stream, whose cheerless waves emitted a melancholy sound beneath us. No path seemed to lead from this dismal situation: total darkness hung round us, and we stood upon the brink of a precipice. I started at my situation. I had hitherto obeyed implicitly the motions of this strange phantom, and I recoiled at remembering the tales of my childhood, which here seemed realized

in my present uncertain situation, where death seemed to await me, and no human help was nigh. The magnitude of my danger aroused my resolution: "I will go no further," cried I; "your purpose may surely be as well answered here as at a mile distance. Speak! tell me what you want?" "Do you mark this place?" said he. "Time and you shall bear witness. Fernando Coello is your friend!—he is mine!—he has given his word. Attend me!"

He motioned to a thicker part of the forest—my feet seemed to move against my will; and about fifty paces led to a small circle of trees, thickly surrounded by underwood. As well as I could perceive through the gloom, it appeared one of those close recesses, where robbers might safely lurk to fall upon the lonely traveler. I had acquired greater courage from the success of my last address. I paused again, and, turning round to this mysterious being—"For what have you led me here?" demanded I, in a firm voice.

"Ascend that tree, marquis," pointing with his hand; "hide yourself amidst the foliage; wait for an hour but, as you value your life, be silent."

"Ridiculous!" said I. "What am I to see there?"

"Are you not already satisfied," said he sternly, "that my words are no jest? Touch me and know whether the grave can lie!"

I stretched out my hand to him, but no ice could have been colder. I shrank back, unable to reply. He pointed in silence to the tree; and, after such conviction, I could not disobey. I looked down when I had reached the first boughs, where the leaves were sufficiently thick to conceal me, but he was gone; and I remained some time in a confusion of mind easily accounted for. I became accustomed to my situation, reflecting on the little foresight we possess, with all our boasted sagacity. Should I not have considered the man as insane, who should have whispered me, when I was retiring to rest at Tolosa, that I should pass part of that night in a tree, in a forest I knew not where? How many times have we experienced similar circumstances, and yet we boast of our knowledge.

I had continued at my post about half an hour, when I heard voices advancing. Two men approached, and sat down on the grass beneath me. Their voices were harsh and severe; but darkness did not allow me to distinguish more. I remained in silence, as I had been cautioned, scarcely daring to think, lest I should betray my situation. One of them, with a rapier, examined the bushes; while the other taking a dark lantern from beneath his black coat, placed it upon the grass, and spreading a coarse cloth, opened a goat skin bag, from which he took some pieces of cheese, and bread, and garlic. The other, being satisfied no person was concealed, sat down with his comrade, and began eagerly to eat.

"These are hard times, Lopez," said he; "this is not the fare we used to have in former days, when our services were wanted."

"By the Holy Virgin!" replied Lopez, "he shall repent it! His borrowed honors shall be taken away! The secret that we know shall blast him to the center. The Moorish castle!"

"Aye, Lopez, that castle might tell a tale! But that is in our own breasts, and the very winds shall not hear it, till the proper time. Were my suspicions certain, by the blasting lightning! I would make them swallow my rapier!"

"I have my doubts upon that business, Jacques; for I heard two voices, or I would then have been satisfied. You know I am no coward; but that chamber unmanned me."

"Had I been there," said Jacques, "my nerves would not have been so weak, I would have told a better tale; but you were startled at the tempest of the night, and let two simple travelers carry away the only positive proof we could bring. That dagger would of itself have confounded him; and we might have lived like princes."

I began to suspect that this Lopez had been the man whom we had heard cross the chamber of the Moorish tower, and I confess I began to tremble at my situation. I listened, scarcely daring to breathe, to the discourse of these wretches, whose horrid features were but partially visible by the dim light of the lantern which burned between them. They continued to eat and discourse, mingling their words with execrations and oaths.

"The old don is not returned," said Lopez; "he pays a regular visit to that ruin. Does he go to examine the wreck he has made, or to visit the dead?"

"Thinkest thou, Lopez, that blood hurts his conscience? no, no, he sleeps tranquil upon a bed of carnage; no ghost troubles his slumbers; but we shall start upon him more fearfully than the grave; we shall demand a recompense for our services that will not be easily satisfied. He thought we were secure when the Turks took the galley."

"And yet, Jacques," replied Lopez, "I have heard another story. Every peasant can tell you the moroseness of his behavior—savage to his daughters, and a tyrant to his servants. Something they say he has seen, and I know not!"

"Away with this folly!" cried Jacques; "by St. Peter! Lopez, you become an old woman! You will be useless in the profession, if you lend your ear to all the babbling tales of these idiots. Seen! ha! ha!"

"You are merry, comrade," replied Lopez; "we have no aqua vita, or I might bear you company. But I have not forgot that night—fearful indeed it was, and near this place too! I shall never forget how he struggled!"

"At it again!" cried Jacques. "Aye, aye," said Lopez, "you may jest, Jacques; pity never entered your composition. Indeed, for that matter, I have not much to spare; but by the Holy Virgin! I felt some repugnance—the wind whistled about us, and the rain fell. He little dreamed of the journey he was going to take!"



"I love not these stories," said Jacques, in a gruff voice; "many a man sets out on a journey, that never comes back again. It seems he has got rid of his second wife as easy as the first. On my soul, I wish we could accommodate matters with him. He is such a true son of the blade, that my heart feels a friendship for him. Nobody should have served him truer, if he had not so meanly stopped our salary. That galls me, and he shall repent it."

"That he shall," cried Lopez; "but you remember the hint that I dropped you the other day? If we could bring them to bear, our fortunes would be no more out at the elbows. I have seen the ladies—they are delicate creatures, and no doubt old Don Padilla will comply to save his neck."

"I know but one objection," said Jacques; "his nephew has not long been of age—he is the only male heir, and must be first put out of the way." "Fernando," replied Lopez, in a low voice, "is now at Tolosa—we will!"

My rage and horror at these words overcame my reason, and prevented my listening further to a plan which raised me almost to madness.

"Villains! Murderers!" exclaimed I. "We are betrayed!" cried Lopez, shutting the lantern. "Who can have overheard us? but death shall close his mouth from telling tales."

One of them immediately fired a pistol into the tree, the ball of which rushed among the leaves without hitting me; it being totally dark. I was aware of the extent of my own imprudence, but it was now too late to regret, and leaping from the tree, sword in hand, the force of my weight brought one of them to the ground, and my sword pierced him through the heart. It was so firmly fixed, passing through him into the earth, that I endeavored in vain to withdraw it, and lay upon him at the mercy of his comrade, who instantly struck at me with a dagger, wounding me severely in the arm. In the dark he could not distinguish me from his companion, and repeating his blow, he buried it in the body of his friend; swearing he had now done my business; but to make sure, he lifted the pistol he had discharged, and with a blow deprived me of sense.

## CHAPTER IV.

This bears the marks of more than mortal man.

WHEN I recovered, I found that it was morning. I attempted to rise, but was so weak with loss of blood, that it was with extreme pain and difficulty I crept away from the body of the assassin, which was clotted with gore.

I sat down on a bank, where I was so much overcome with faintness, that I expected every moment to breathe my last. While I sat thus, with the horrid object of the dead body before me, I reflected upon the death of my father, which, after what had happened, I could no longer doubt; and the awful manner in which I had received the information, added to the melancholy tidings.

No person approached, and my voice was too feeble to be heard. I looked round, but the place was wild, and without any path that I could distinguish. In this situation I gave myself up to the expectation of death; and I cannot say I felt the regret which might have been expected in one so young, and with so many prospects of future pleasures.

"At most," thought I, "a very few years would have deprived this body of its vigor, and reduced it to its present imbecility—my senses would have gradually decayed—my years would have fled by as moments—and my place would, in a very short time, have been no longer acknowledged amongst the living. Fearful and tremendous moment!—inconceivable change! But this present moment and my body is animated with various sensations, my mind is endowed with the powers of reflection—yet how soon and I shall be like that body before me, a mass of inert and unconscious matter?"

From these meditations I fell into a reverie, from which I was roused by a slight rustle of the branches, and, raising my eyes, I perceived something move along the thicket; I elevated my voice as loud as possible, but my efforts were too feeble to be heard, and I resigned myself again to my fate. A moment after a little dog came barking into the copse, followed by two ladies who were led by his clamours.

At sight of the dismal scene which presented to their eyes, they uttered a loud cry of horror; one of them appeared nearly fainting, leaning upon her companion for support, which delayed their flight, and gave me time to arrest their attention.

"Ladies," said I, "take some compassion upon a wounded stranger. If it is in your power send me some assistance, or I shall perish."

"Holy Mother!" said one of them, drawing her companion nearer, "what a sight is this! How came you in this terrible situation? and who is that person before you drenched in blood?"

"That, lady," replied I, "is a robber. Two of them fell upon me; the one you see lies there, and the other has escaped."

"Is he near this place?" said the other lady, looking round with a fearful eye, and a changing countenance. "Let us hasten, Virginia, to send some assistance. Whence came you, cavalier?"

"I am an officer," replied I; "I came from Tolosa, where I have a friend, if you will have the goodness to send for him."

"It is fifteen miles from here to Tolosa, and you must have assistance sooner," answered the lady.

"I am certain," returned I, "that I walked from Tolosa to this place in half an hour."

"Poor cavalier!" said Virginia. "Let us make haste, Almira; he is already lightheaded, and may die before we can get any assistance."

They hastened away, leaving me not knowing what to think, or how it was possible that I could have walked so great a distance in so short a time, unless my senses had been under some powerful delusion.

In about a quarter of an hour they returned with several servants, who made a litter of boughs, upon which I was placed, after taking a cordial from the fair hands of Virginia, who seemed to take particular interest in my situation, and charmed me with the sympathizing tenderness of her disposition.

With some difficulty the servants carried me amongst the low underwood of the thicket, which spread and extended into a forest; in the midst of which we arrived at a large Gothic building of considerable magnificence. Its gloomy turrets frowned over the waving landscape, and seemed to nod defiance to the black mountains of Sierra Morena, which arose behind it.

A chamber was allotted me by the ladies, under the direction of a silver-headed domestic; and a servant dispatched to Tolosa to inform my friend of the accident, and to bring a surgeon to my assistance.

In the meantime I felt myself considerably relieved, from the prospect I had of tranquility, and the nourishment I had taken. I inquired of the servant that attended me, who was the owner of the castle and what was its name.

"It is called," answered he, "the Castle of Montillo, and the name of his excellency is Don Ovario Padilla."

"Don Padilla!" repeated I, in surprise; "is this the Castle of Don Padilla?"

"Do you doubt it?" said the servant. "What is there wonderful in that?"

"O, nothing! I only thought it strange that I should have rambled so far. Is Don Padilla at home?"

"No," answered he; "he is gone to take his usual journey to Grenada. Perhaps you might not have been so welcome had he been here."

"Why so, friend? How soon do you expect him?"

"He usually stays a month; and now he has been gone a fortnight."

"I suppose these ladies are his daughters? They are very fine women."

"Aye, aye, cavalier," returned he with a broad grin; "'tis a pity you could not get here without this ugly adventure; I warrant we should have had fine sport now his excellency is away. I am sure the castle is more like a dungeon than anything else eleven months in the year."

"I suppose you have not many balls and fetes when he is present?" said I; "I understand he is very melancholy." This I had gathered from the description I had of him by our host De Tormes; and I made no doubt but this was the man the villains had mentioned. To my interrogation the servant replied:

"Melancholy, cavalier! why he's worse than melancholy, he's stark mad at times! then woe to poor Miguel if he comes in the way! And as to dances, and those sort of things, O Lord, why we never dare move a foot about the house, but as if we were walking to a funeral; unless when his excellency wants anything, and then we must fly, quick, flash, like lightning, at the turn of his hand. Then if he was to see any of us laugh, he flies in such a plaguey passion, you would think we had robbed him."

"But can you give no account for this disposition? it surely cannot be natural."

"In my opinion it is the most unnatural humor in the world; but I believe it's this old gloomy dungeon of a place. Do you know, it puts me quite in the horrors myself; I ain't like the same as I was when I first came here. Then there are such stories about its dark and winding stairs and passages, empty chambers, gloomy dungeons, and terrible phantoms, that it would make your hair stand on an end to hear them. There's old Gonzalez knows a pretty many of them; but he's a close dog, hums and ha's for an hour, and then ends with a shrug and a nod."

I inquired if he had ever seen any of those phantoms he mentioned; he replied:

"I can't say that I have; but I have heard groans enough to curdle the blood in my veins. Then they say that the clashing of swords, and shivering of armor may be frequently heard in the east side of the castle, which has been shut up this twenty years, and not a soul is allowed to enter any of the chambers; though for that I believe, if the doors were set wide open, nobody would have the least curiosity, unless it were the ladies. They, to be sure, once or twice asked the keys of his excellency, but they might as well have asked for his whiskers!"

"Is Don Padilla married?" inquired I.

"No, no," said Miguel; "he has been twice married already; but for that matter he wanted to be so a third time, but Donna Isabella did not like to venture, after what had happened to his first wives."

"What did happen, Miguel?" said I; "is not death a common accident?" "Yes, yes; but then the manner is sometimes different. Now, for my part, I should like to die in my bed; and you, as a soldier, would like to die in a battle, or so."

"Not altogether," replied I, smiling; "but what was there particular in the death of Padilla's wives?"

"Nay, cavalier, I did not say there was anything in particular—report is never to be believed—or else, to be sure, if one was to believe report, things were bad enough. But I do not like talking; and to say the truth, if what I have already said were to come to his excellency's ears, I must troop from the castle. Nobody knows for certain, unless it is old Gonzalez; and he's almost as silent as my lord. He'll sit for whole hours, and say nothing to any mother's soul of us. I would give anything to know as much as he knows."

I began to be tired with the loquacity of Miguel who seemed willing to tell everything, which I had no wish to hear; and finding an inclination to sleep, I desired he would do as he had intimated, and leave.

It was some hours before I awoke; when I found myself considerably revived, and the confusion of my

head tranquilized. On opening my eyes, I beheld my friend Fernando sitting by me—his countenance pale as death. He would not suffer me to be awakened on his arrival; judging well, that rest was as necessary to me as medicine.

The surgeon then came in, and having examined my wound, assured me that in a few days I might leave my chamber. "I am very glad of it," said Fernando, "as his presence at Madrid will be necessary as soon as possible."

"What business requires me there?" said I; "have you heard then?" "Heard what?" demanded he, with an inquiring look. "Have you received any news from Madrid?"

"Ah! my dear friend," answered I, "you have received an account of my father's death, and fear to alarm me by a hasty disclosure; but it was known to me some hours since."

"You surprise me," said he; "the courier arrived at Tolosa but a moment before we came from thence—I dismounted to break open the packet. When I arrived here I found you asleep, and was told you had been so near two hours; how then is it possible you could have received these tidings?"

"I knew it last night at Tolosa," replied I; "but at a more convenient opportunity I will explain." He immediately comprehended me, and remained silent.

In the evening I found myself so much recovered, that I desired Fernando would come and sit with me; and, under pretense of family concerns, we admitted no visitor. I then explained to him the strange circumstances of the preceding night, which increased his melancholy air.

"This, my dear Albert," said he, "is no common business; but why you and I should be selected as instruments confounds me. 'Tis true that this Don Padilla is an uncle of mine—he was my mother's youngest brother—and, if his daughters die without issue, I am his sole heir. I have also a dormant claim upon this very estate, but as I never heard that my family had received any particular injury from him, I did not wish to enter into any process, which would appear as unnatural on my part. His first wife died suddenly when I was very young—I believe it was from a surfeit at a feast; and then he married again in a shorter time than was decent."

"Do you remember the name of the first lady?" inquired I.

"Her name was Emira; if I remember right, she was a daughter to the then governor of Lima."

"Holy Heaven!" exclaimed I; "are you certain, my friend, in what you say? If so, she was my mother's sister. A sister whom she has long lamented as swallowed up in an earthquake with her husband, after herself, who was the elder sister, returned to Spain, and was married to the marquis, my father. But how could she have remained unknown in Spain?"

"That is very easily accounted for," answered Fernando. "Don Padilla never leaves this retreat. My mother was his sister. My father died a few months after his marriage, and my mother at the hour which gave me birth. Thus I was left to the protection of guardians; and was educated at the castle of the Marquis de los Velos, to whose interest, before his death, I owed the commission I now enjoy, till I shall be of age to claim my father's property. My information relative to Don Padilla is vague. I know only that a little after his sister's death, after having run through his fortune, he went abroad an extravagant spendthrift. In our western colonies he contrived to repair his fortune by means which are unknown; and when he returned, he disclaimed all connection with his relations, from motives of resentment at their formal refusal to supply his extravagance, and from that moroseness of disposition, which, I am informed, renders his life a burden to himself. He had two daughters, I was told, very fine women; but, till this day, I never had the pleasure of seeing them."

I inquired who was the lady he had made his second wife.

"He married a lady from Grenada, about the time of Philip's persecution of the Moors," replied he; "but of her I know no more than that she died in less than a twelvemonth, leaving a daughter, the Lady Almira."

"What you have informed me," said I, "open upon me new scenes. Were you not very much frightened at my singular absence?"

"I had more reason to be frightened than you may imagine," said he. "You know what strange forebodings hung upon my mind; and when I did sleep it was oppressive and heavy. Images of unconnected forms filled my mind, and harassed my imagination. Methought that the figure of the wounded soldier stood over me, with anger in his countenance, and I heard him pronounce my name. I fancied that I awoke, and he stood beside me."

"Fernando," said he, "what regard do you pay to your promises? My service never interrupts your occupations. Rise! rise! your friend is far hence! If he falls, revenge him, for he is in my service. Behold me! mark me! know me!" cried he in a louder voice; and throwing open his soldier's dress, I beheld beneath it a Moorish robe stained with blood, which appeared even then to trickle down from several wounds. I turned away my eyes with horror, and was so agitated, that I awoke in reality from this double dream; and, starting from my bed, went immediately to awaken you. My agitation and terror was extreme when I found you absent. Then all the warning of the phantom of my mind arose in reality; I believed that you were certainly murdered; and I uttered a cry of despair, which alarmed the house."

"After searching every part of the inn, I dispatched several messengers round the town and its environs with very little hope; for it appeared to me above comprehension, that you should have left your room."



and the inn, and yet all the doors remain fastened. From my anxiety I was relieved by the arrival of your messenger; I think, however, we may both learn that some event of strange incident hangs over us."

"That admits of no doubt," replied I; "it is not for trifles the usual order of nature is interrupted. If I were superstitious I might now fancy Almonzor to be a magician; but, as I said before, any man might make the same guesses, with the same certainty of truth; this, however, is very different. The spirit of the dead, for important reasons, may be permitted to appear; but no man can be supposed to have power to call up an evil spirit, or the soul of a departed human being at his pleasure, to satisfy an idle and impious curiosity; as little probable is it, that any finite creature can be master of future events."

"I am of your opinion," replied he; "but what am I to do? Am I to charge Padilla with the murder of I know not who? How am I to bring proof of such a charge?"

"We must wait," answered I. "Singular events have brought us to this castle, at a time when admission was alone possible: for I am informed that his jealousy or his conscience prevents him ever opening his gates to a stranger. I have been told very strange reports are circulated about the next range of apartments; at present, I am not fully informed, but if possible, we will examine that side of the building. I am now considerably interested; as well from the adventure of the assassins, as by what I have now learned from yourself regarding my mother's sister."

The attention that I received from my friend, and the fair sisters, in a few days restored me so far as to be able to walk about my chamber; but though the wounds of my body were amended, I found that my heart had received an impression not so easily to be remedied; though I concealed from Virginia that I was the son of her mother's sister.

My friend encouraged me to hope, by repeating to me many little things Virginia had said in my favor to her sister and himself. "And," added he, laughing, "I believe I have made some progress in the affection of my cousin Almira."

"I congratulate you," said I; "that will be acting like a man. She is a little better than a picture."

"I allow her merit," answered he; "but fancy, you know, is everything with a lover; and I do not believe I shall ever sincerely love, till I find a lady resembling this picture."

At these words he took it from his bosom where it always hung, and gazed upon it with pleasure. "There is certainly some little likeness," said he, "in the general outline, between this and my cousin Almira; but then she is by no means so finished a creature."

While he was thus speaking, old Gonzalez had entered the room without our noticing him; his eye glancing upon the picture, he smiled; and putting back his white locks, "Ah, cavalier!" said he, "you are a happy man, you wear your mistress in your bosom; will you favor and old man with the sight of a young beauty? I have seen many a fair flower bloom and wither. I am now withered myself, for that matter, but yet it pleases me to see a pretty face."

"Look upon this, then," said Fernando, "and tell me if you ever saw a prettier." The old man then took the portrait in his hand, and gazing upon it, stood motionless, while the tears trickled down from his eyes in large drops.

"Why is this?" said Fernando, somewhat surprised. "Why do you weep, my friend?"

"Forgive me," answered he; "forgive an old man who is full of fanciful conceits; that picture brought former times to my recollection, days long ago gone away."

"But what circumstances does this picture recall, Gonzalez, that you weep? Does it remind you of any one you know?"

"Ah, cavalier!" said he, shaking his head, "I could show you a picture exactly like it in the picture gallery; it was accounted an admirable likeness of my late mistress, the mother of Almira; but it is somewhat older than this portrait represents. Is this lady alive, señor?"

Fernando, who was sinking fast into reflection, was aroused at this question, which he did not expect.

"I know not," replied he, "whether she is or no; but could you not oblige me by showing me the picture gallery? You have raised my curiosity, for you know we are always interested, by trifles, if they relate to ourselves."

Gonzalez looked at Fernando, repeating. "By trifles, señor!" "Yes, trifles," answered Fernando; "do you consider it a great favor to show me these pictures?"

"Aye, that was not what we were saying," replied Gonzalez. "Well, well," said Fernando, "never mind what we were saying; will you lead me thither now? we shall have sufficient time before the sun sets. I never did see my aunt living, and now I should wish to see her resemblance."

"Your aunt!" repeated Gonzalez, in apparent surprise; "was Lady Zidana, your aunt? Holy Fathers! is this possible!"

"I assure you I speak truth," replied Fernando. "Did you not know that I am of the family of the Coello's and that Don Padilla was?"

"Yes, yes, now I remember," answered he; "but it is very singular. If you will follow me, señor, and make but little noise, we will go by the back passages. Servants are so curious, and so fond of the marvelous, that anything in a large Gothic building like this excites their wonder."

I would willingly have accompanied them, but I feared too much exertion; and I doubted not but my friend might gain more information alone—this cautious domestic not being easily induced to general confidence.

After traversing several dark and winding passages, they entered a large room, very elegantly furnished in the old Spanish style. Antique tapestry covered the

walls, along which ranged a number of whole length pictures of generations long since mouldered into dust. At the upper end of the gallery appeared two large gilt frames, and, in place of painting, a curtain of black silk hung down, exactly covering the canvas.

"There," said Gonzalez, "are the pictures of his excellency's two wives. He never can bear to look upon them since they are dead; and to prevent his feelings being shocked he has thus hung them in mourning; shall I draw the veil, señor? This is the Lady Emira, Don Padilla's first wife—she is a very fine person—she died very young, señor."

"That remark," said Fernando, "reminds also, that she died suddenly. You knew her, Gonzalez?"

The old man replied, "She did die suddenly, señor, very suddenly. I was not then at the castle—I have, however, been informed, that she died by a surflet at a feast."

"That was a common report, you know, whether it was true?" "And why should you doubt it?" "I have my reasons, Gonzalez—they are buried here" (laying his hand upon his bosom). "You know I am Don Padilla's nephew, the Marquis de Denia is nephew to this lady—can you suppose ours an idle curiosity?"

"Ah, señor," replied Gonzalez, mournfully, "we must not trust our senses in this world. I hear, and see, and am silent. Of things which we cannot prove, 'tis best to hear, and see, and say nothing."

"But many incidents, which singly are nothing," said Fernando, "added together, may bring a volume of proof—proof deep and irresistible."

"Then eternal truth will appear, and the injured receive atonement," said Gonzalez. "And murderers," cried Fernando, "receive the reward of their black malignity." "Do you know then," said Gonzalez, looking round him with fearful apprehension; do you then, señor, anything that can lead you to such a suspicion? we have got upon a very strange subject."

"I have reason: the reports that I have heard relating to the eastern part of this building; the strange melancholy of Don Padilla; this dagger," cried he, taking from his dress the dagger he had found in the Moorish ruin, and presenting its rusty point to Gonzalez, who started back affrighted at the sight.

"Ha! Fernando!" said he, "where did you meet with that weapon? the enchasure of gold down the blade is remarkable—it was brought from New Spain."

"I understand you," replied Fernando, admiring the discretion of this old man. "This dagger was wrapped in a Moorish habit, stained with blood; now dare you trust me, when you have this dreadful credential of confidence!"

"What am I to say? Of the death of the Lady Emira I know nothing positive. At that time I lived with my Lady Zidana in Grenada. I had a sister, named Teresa, who lived in this castle, and was waiting-maid to Lady Emira. Don Padilla never treated this lady, since their return from New Spain, with that kindness, her goodness deserved; he was always pretending to be jealous of her, though, Heaven knows, how unjustly! for she never set her foot out of the castle from the first day she entered it—except, perhaps, a little walk in the woods."

"You may easily suppose, señor, what sort of a life this was for a young and beautiful lady to lead; and had it not been for the playfulness of her little infant Virginia, it would have been sad indeed."

Fernando ventured to remind him, that he was now straying from the point.

"You are right," said he; "I might dwell for days on these subjects, if I gave loose to the inclinations of my tongue. The jealousies of Don Padilla became every day more insupportable; and his threats to confine her wholly in the castle, rendered her life very unhappy. About this time the persecutions of Philip broke out, and he was frequently absent for weeks, nobody knew whither. He arrived suddenly one night at the castle in better spirits than usual; and surprised my lady with requesting she would order a little entertainment, as he intended supping with her that night. They supped by themselves, attended only by my sister Teresa. Lady Emira was in excellent spirits; and Don Padilla in seeming good humor. Seeming I call it, because I cannot think these sudden changes natural: we do not change from bad to good in an hour, señor."

"Very well, go on," said Fernando, impatiently.

"After supper my lady was suddenly taken ill; Don Padilla would have it, she had overforced her appetite; but whatever it was, she died the same night. Listen, señor! did you hear any noise?"

"No," answered Fernando; "what should we hear?"

"I know not," said Gonzalez, listening; "but for some time after the lady's death, there were noises, very strange, and very unaccountable heard."

"Did no suspicion arise at the sudden death of Emira?" said Fernando; "did it create no inquiry?"

"This part of Spain was at that time all in alarm—most men had sufficient business of their own to attend—but you shall hear. Lady Emira was laid out on a bed of state: I could show it you now if I had the keys of those chambers. Several of the neighboring people were invited to see her, and Don Padilla made them remark, that she was very little changed by death, but this did not silence all suspicion. My sister nearly broke our heart lamenting for her mistress, and was, with difficulty, kept from constantly remaining in the room till the day of the funeral. The corpse was removed into another chamber, where it lay in state; and Padilla took the key of the chambers where his lady had before resided, into his own possession, and would not permit a thing to be touched. On the fourth day, in the evening, the coffin was screwed down, in the presence of all the domestics; who, with tears in their eyes, took a last look at their mistress. It was interred in the dusk of the evening in the chapel vaults belonging to the castle, and Don Padilla retired to his own apartment in visible agitation of mind."

"Old Pedro, who was then steward, and had a great

affection for his lady, took it into his head that she was not dead, and that Don Padilla had only buried her with a sleeping potion; for which purpose he watched for three successive nights at the entrance of the chapel: but all remained uninterrupted, and he was satisfied of the certainty of his lady's death. But now, señor, I am to relate to you a circumstance to me unaccountable, and which, I fear, will never be explained till the day when many a foul secret will come to light. My sister Teresa, who was inconsolable for the loss of her mistress, could not rest in one place, but wandered from room to room as if in search of something she had lost. She had put little Virginia to bed after the funeral, and stole towards the apartments of her late lady. She knew that Don Padilla was in his own room, and she ventured from curiosity, perhaps, to try the outer door. It opened and she entered the rooms, where everything remained as she had left it."

"The desolate air of the deserted chambers inspired her with a superstitious fear. The sun had been some time gone down, and every object was indistinctly seen, so that she almost trembled as she stepped over the floors; and would have returned had not some unknown impulse urged her on. At last she came to the little bed-chamber, where Emira used to sleep in the absence of her husband. The door stood ajar, and she ventured to push it open, when she beheld the figure of her late mistress kneeling at the foot of a little table, on which was placed a crucifix. Her lips seemed to move and her features were paler than death. Teresa stood motionless at the sight, and had neither power to speak or move; when she was suddenly grasped by some person behind her, and fell senseless on the ground."

"This person was Don Padilla; who carried her himself into the great hall, and commanded the servants to put her to bed. On her recovery she found herself in her own room, with me sitting beside her, for I had that very evening arrived at the castle to take her back to Grenada. When she recovered her senses, she informed me of these incidents; but the last appeared to me so strange, that I knew not what to think; especially when I considered the uncertainty of twilight, and the disturbed mind of Teresa."

"She must certainly have been deceived," said Fernando; "it could not be her mistress—and it was a singular posture for a ghost."

"I know not," replied Gonzalez, "my mind is bewildered with the circumstances; for from that night to this I have never seen my sister."

"You dream surely," cried Fernando; "it was not your sister, but Lady Emira who died."

"I am well aware of that," replied he. "After what Teresa had told me, I left her to make some inquiries amongst the servants—she slept alone—and in the morning her room was found empty; and no account could be learned of her from that hour to this."

"That is singular indeed," said Fernando, fixing his eyes steadily upon Gonzalez; "what do you suspect?"

"Ah, señor," shaking his head, "what can one suspect in such a case? She must have spirited away by Don Padilla, to prevent her telling secrets he had no mind should be known."

"But what secrets could she tell?—she did not know that her lady was poisoned. You say she saw her buried with her own eyes—and, to say the truth, in this instance I am apt to think her imagination deceived her."

"It might be so," said the old man, with a doubting air; "but her absence is no deception. However, let us now look at the second picture, before the sun is wholly lost behind the black waiving forest. There, Fernando, there is a charming creature!"

"Charming, indeed!" cried Fernando, starting back with surprise; "'tis the very exact resemblance of this portrait—what a heavenly countenance! This lady was your mistress, I think? Did she live long with Padilla?"

"Only two years, señor; she was then lost to us."

"Lost to you! Is she not dead?"

"I fear she is," replied Gonzalez, putting his hands to his eyes; "but in what way nobody knows."

"She did not die of a surflet? You know her story, do you not?" said Fernando. "I have particular reasons to wish for some information, as this picture I wear may inform you. Come to the chamber where my friend the Marquis de Denia is confined; on the word of a Spaniard you may depend on our honor."

"I will attend at twelve," replied Gonzalez; "the servants will then be at rest."

Fernando, after gazing some time upon the picture of Lady Zidana, which the rays of the setting sun gilded and enlivened, returned to inform me of this long conversation, and to advance a thousand suspicions. The sudden loss of Teresa, and in so particular a manner, seemed to stamp guilt upon the death of Emira; but it was without trace, and, affording no clew to conviction, served only to stimulate our interests.

We were interrupted by a gentle strain of sweet music, which stole upon the evening breeze. Fernando opened the casement, which overlooked the gardens of the castle, now overshadowed by the twilight. We listened to the music which came upon the wind, and were charmed with the tender expression of the composition, which was a Spanish love song. When the music ceased, we felt disappointed—waiting at the window for a returning sound. We did not judge wrong in supposing it to be the ladies who had entertained themselves with this innocent amusement in the pleasant shades of the gardens; and we soon after saw them appear; the one with a lute, the other with a bandola.

We saluted them from the window, and they returned the compliment; though it was too late to see their features distinctly.

This little incident served to make them the subject of our disclosure; and the difference of their manner from those of their father, while they had his example before them, and felt the influence of his power, drew forth our praise.



## CHAPTER V.

"O! mischief, thou art quick  
To enter in the thoughts of desperate man."

At the appointed time we heard a rap at our door, and opening it, old Gonzalez entered, looking round him with caution. Having closed the door, "I have brought us a bottle of wine," said he, "it will be a refreshment, and help our spirits at this solemn hour, when the inhabitants of the grave are abroad."

We each took a glass, and, being seated, requested him to inform us what he knew of Lady Zidana.

"She is, or was," said he, "as you may judge by the name, of Moorish lineage; but her ancestors having frequently intermarried with the natives of Spain, the flatness of the Morocco features is done away. She was married very early in life to Count Ferendez, by whom she had a daughter. She lived with her lord in the greatest harmony, at their castle on the banks of the Darro."

"I believe," remarked Fernando, interrupting him and looking towards me, "that castle is now in ruins?" "Alas, senors!" replied the old man, "well I know it—and Don Padilla knows it. It was twenty years ago the most magnificent in the country. Some of the greatest rooms were built of marble; and the fountains of water cooled the heat of the air. Don Padilla had known my lord the Count Ferendez early in life; for at that time Count Ferendez was as gay and as extravagant as himself."

"At the first visit Don Padilla made to our castle, he saw and admired my lady. I had my eyes upon him, and was not long in discovering the attention he paid her; but whether my lady gave him a dismissal in private, or he acted from deeper policy, I know not, but we had little of his company until the edict of Philip destroyed at once all the connections of families and friends. All the Moorish families were at once reduced to beggary and exile. Nothing but the most dreadful distress was to be seen. Count Ferendez assembled his dependents with intent to resist the army of the court, but his incapacity of means was every hour more visible; and certain and dreadful destruction hung over him and his household. He would not change his religion, as several persons of rank were ready to do, and he awaited with resignation the threatening storm."

"While things were in this state, Don Padilla arrived at midnight, with two soldiers, his only attendants. He was a long time closeted with the count, and I could gather no more of their conversation than by the effects which followed. Count Ferendez the same night set out for the Castle of Montillo, carrying with him a number of jewels, and disguising himself under the dress of one of the soldiers; both of them accompanying him as a guard."

Fernando groaned at this observation, but remained silent: Gonzalez continued:

"I understood that Padilla had offered him the asylum of this castle, till he might procure a purchaser for his estates, or join his brothers in Africa: while my Lady Zidana, and her little daughter should remain at a secret residence in Grenada, till she could conveniently follow. Be this as it would, my unfortunate master never reached this castle. He was murdered, barbarously murdered on the road; but whether by an accidental encounter with some straggling party of soldiers, or whether—"

The clock struck twelve, and Gonzalez paused to dry a tear from his cheek, and compose the perturbation of his mind.

"What you have told us," said I, "is strange; it forms a ground for terrible suspicions. Did you see those soldiers to whose care Don Padilla delivered your master?"

"Not fully," replied Gonzalez. "They were introduced in so cautious a manner, that I caught but a faint glance as they passed; but I have since thought they had more the appearance of assassins than of regular soldiers."

"Have these men ever appeared since?" inquired Fernando.

"Never, senor, to my knowledge," replied he. "It was said they had never been found any more than my lord."

"That is most strange!" said I. "What proof then have you beyond suspicion? or how came this to your knowledge without some witness?"

"It was not in the nature of things, that my master should forsake his wife and daughter. He departed at the dead of the night; he has never been seen since; but the soldier's dress he had on was found in the wood near the castle, torn and bloody. What greater proofs are needful?"

He had scarcely pronounced the last word, when we were all startled by the great clock again striking twelve. "What can this mean?" said Fernando, turning pale.

"Ah, senor!" replied Gonzalez, calmly, "that is a supernatural intimation, these omens are frequent; they stir up recollection, and prevent black actions from slipping over the memory. I have things to relate yet more terrible, and more strange, than a warning like this."

"Go on then," said I; and he thus continued:

"Don Padilla conveyed my lady and her daughter to Grenada, where he left them; and giving me directions to secure the most valuable moveables, and bring them to my master at his castle, I obeyed. On my arrival at this place, judge, senors, my surprise; it was then that I learned all at once the death of Lady Emira. The murder of my master, and the loss of my sister quickly followed. It was with difficulty I supported myself under so much distress; and had not my mind been hardened by the examples of equal misery, which every hour crowded upon me, I should certainly have sunk beneath it."

"My suspicions were great and strong; but prudence

locked them in my own bosom. I watched the dark looks of Padilla, and thought that I could read the fate of my master in his countenance; but such a suspicion I dared not breathe to myself."

"The old steward, Pedro, was a man who had caught much of his master's gloom, and I suspected knew some of his secrets, which determined me to guard my expressions. I had not been many days in the castle, when passing one evening along a dusky gallery, I at all heard the sound of voices as in anger. I listened, and could distinguish the tones of supplication, and the threats of a person in rage; but the subject I could not hear; a word or two being all I could learn in a sentence; from which I judged, that the supplicating person had made some discovery which was of importance. In about half an hour they parted; and I concealed myself in a dark corner, that I might not be seen. Pedro came out, his lips pale, his knees trembling, and his eyes staring wildly, he passed on with a quick and hasty step, as if he was pursued by some frightful apparition."

"He had not reached the end of the gallery when Padilla came out. This was the first time I had ever seen him enraged; and, gloomy as was my situation, his frightful frown and glowing eyes struck me with terror. 'Pedro,' cried he, in a voice of thunder; at which the unhappy wretch started nearly to falling. 'Pedro, come here!—were you in Peru, villain, I would grind you into powder! obey my words. This is the last night you remain in these walls. I shall send a guide with you to your relations in Murcia. Haste, and never appear before my sight, unless you would have that I should strike you dead at my feet!' Pedro threw himself upon the ground and entreated forgiveness. 'If,' said he, 'I may be pardoned, never shall my lips—'

"No," cried Padilla, changing countenance; 'Never shall thy lips betray me. Do you know me? If you do, arise and prepare to be gone.' With these words he strode back to the room, the door of which he jarred to with a force that resounded along the gallery."

"Pedro appeared confounded with terror. I dared not quit my station; as I knew not the consequences that might ensue from a discovery of my having been witness to such a scene, in a castle where violence seemed to reign. Pedro withdrew in disorder, and I quitted my station with caution."

"I had various conjectures in my own mind on this occasion, and imputed the rage of Don Padilla to the suspicions Pedro had expressed in watching at the entrance into the chapel. Be that as it would, Pedro left the castle the same night."

"How do you know he left it?" said Fernando.

"Because he was not to be found the next morning."

"That might be," replied Fernando, with a groan.

"Merciful Heaven! what thoughts crowd upon me! Proceed."

"The next morning Don Padilla called me to his room. 'You were a faithful servant, Gonzalez, to my friend,' said he; 'you shall not suffer by his unfortunate death, if you serve me as you did him. My old steward, Pedro, left me last night to retire into Murcia among his relations.'

"His relations!" muttered I, before I recollected myself."

"Aye, his relations," repeated he in a lofty voice, and eyeing me with a keen look. "Don't you think, honest Gonzalez, 'tis a comfortable thing to retire in your old age amongst your friends? If you serve me faithfully, I will provide for you in the same way."

"Heaven forbid!" thought I, but I said nothing except observing that I did not consider myself as discharged from duty to my lady."

"Nor I either," replied he, with a grim smile. "The fine castle, Gonzalez, is buried in ruins by the king's troops: your lady is coming to live in my castle, and I will protect her with my life."

"And her little daughter, your excellency?"

"Yes, yes, both; I am the protector of all related to my unfortunate friend the count. Hear me, Gonzalez! I am, in two days, going to Grenada; I shall bring your lady hither, and give you in charge to see the chambers of my late wife prepared and decorated. You are, from this time, my steward, in place of Pedro."

"It was with a heavy heart I entered on this office; not a little perplexed in my own mind with the directions I had received, to fit up the Lady Elmira's rooms; but yet I had no idea that Padilla would ever prevail on my mistress to marry him; he, however, knew too well the power he now possessed, and, as I have learned, he mingled threats with persuasion, and moved, at length, by the picture he drew of her own poverty, and the misery she would entail upon her little daughter, he prevailed upon her to give a reluctant consent. I received these tidings with sorrow, being obliged to prepare for the solemnization of this unhallowed marriage at the Castle of Montillo."

"In about a week my lady arrived. The deepest melancholy was fixed upon her countenance, and it was easy to see that grief lay heavy at her heart. She retired with her daughter to the apartments prepared, and shutting herself in, gave way to grief. Pity was all I had to bestow, as I had not even an opportunity of speaking."

"Don Padilla hastened the preparations; and to cover a bad action by a blaze of splendor, invited many of the neighboring nobility to be present at his nuptials."

"The long gallery was filled with musicians, and the company were invited to dance before the supper should be served. Lady Zidana was dressed in white, with a plume of black feathers as a tribute to her late lord. She resisted all the invitations of Don Padilla to dance, who, to say the truth, exerted himself in every point to please her, and drive from her features that grief which, in spite of her efforts, was but too visible."

"The dances occupied the evening, and it was almost twelve o'clock before the company assembled in the large Gothic hall to supper. Several musicians were

placed there upon a temporary stage, and such of us who could be spared from attending the company, contrived to witness this elegant assemblage of all that seemed beautiful, rich and grand. The number of officers dressed in their uniforms, and mingled with the variegated company, added much to the sight. They took their seats amidst universal mirth, and a general good humor prevailed. Little did they think in which way it was to be interrupted!

"The tables were heaped with the choicest viands, and wine of different sorts stood in goblets for the accommodation of the guests. The music played in lively strains, echoing through the lofty network of the Gothic hall; and nothing seemed capable of interrupting the general festivity—when the great clock of the castle struck one."

"At that moment a fearful cry was heard, as if resounding from every part of the castle, and pervading every ear with indescribable fear. It seemed like the cry of murder, mingling with an eastern blast. The company all started, and gazed upon each other in silent consternation. The tapers which blazed upon the tables, and in branches along the walls, suddenly expired: and from a scene of brightness and splendor, arose the deepest darkness and distress. The music suddenly ceased—the company rose in dismay, crowding through the avenues leading from the hall in the greatest distress—several of the ladies fainting with affright."

"It was impossible to distinguish persons in this general confusion, and I concealed myself in the tapestry hangings in the first emotions of fear. In a very few minutes no person remained in the banquet hall, except Don Padilla, his new married lady, and myself. The mingling sounds of the flying company were subsided into a death-like silence, and the tapers as suddenly relighted, as they had been extinguished; but now a more terrible object presented to our eyes."

"The figure of the murdered Count Ferendez stood at the head of the table, facing Lady Zidana and Padilla; he was clothed in the dress of a soldier, as he had quitted his castle; he cast around him a glance of fierce inquiry darting as a sunbeam. My lady immediately fainted, and the bloodless cheeks of Padilla betrayed his fears."

"The spectre gazed upon him a few moments."

"Knowest thou me?" said he, in a hollow voice. Padilla's lips trembled, but he returned no answer."

"See," said the spectre, "the work of thine hand?—but how long shall these actions prosper?"

"It was not I—my hand never raised itself against you," faltered Padilla."

"The spectre frowned. 'Can you deceive me now?' said he. 'Do I not know thy thoughts and thy actions. But thy time is not yet—'

"Padilla seemed to recover at these words. 'Away!' cried he, with rising firmness, 'thy threats and thyself are as shades!'

"The spectre raised his hand in a threatening posture—the same fearful cry sounded through the hall—the lamps were extinguished for a moment, and again relighted without hands."

"The mixture of passion expressed on the brow of Padilla made me tremble as I stood. He sat leaning his chin upon the palms of his hands, gazing upon the place where the specter had been, as though he was yet before him; while Lady Zidana lay upon the ground unnoticed, and the feast remained on the tables unregarded."

"I wished to retreat, for I was sick with various emotions, but I trembled at being discovered. Don Padilla, after musing some time, suddenly started up, and pouring out a large goblet full of aqua vite, drank it off. It was now I endeavored to get away; but his alarm had given quickness to his hearing; he started, and turning suddenly round, perceived me stealing along the side of the hall."

"'Ha!' cried he, drawing his sword, 'thou art no shade—but I will quickly make thee such!' He darted upon me, and dragging me by the throat along the ground to the table, lifted his sword to strike."

Here the old man paused, and looked round, as if apprehensive that Don Padilla was yet standing over him. The castle bell at that period tolled—one. I shuddered at the melancholy sound, which was lengthened through the hollow apartments, and seemed to realize the dreadful scenes Gonzalez had impressed upon our minds."

For some time an awful silence prevailed, apprehension marked our features, and, taking each a glass of wine, Gonzalez continued:

"When Padilla perceived it was I, he quitted his grasp, still holding his glittering sword to my throat."

"'Gonzalez,' said he, 'is it you? Pedro was dismissed my service for a smaller crime—but by my soul! I swear that a second shall be the forfeit of your life. Is it for such base wretches as thou art, to pry into the secrets of a man like me? Hear me, villain! this is the term on which I now let thee live; conceal what thou hast seen in thy inmost soul—dare not to whisper it to thyself. If I ever learn that thou dost—that day shall be to thee black with vengeance!'

"Nor shalt thou escape!" said a voice, at which we all arose in confusion and amazement."

"What can this mean?" cried Gonzalez, trembling; "who can have overheard us?"

"It is some servant," said Fernando, "whose idle curiosity has led him hither."

He did not wait for more words, but leaping forward, he hastily opened the door and ran along the corridor; but he could distinguish no one, nor hear any retreating footstep. "This is truly astonishing," said he, returning. "Had any person been there, I must have heard them."

"What chambers are adjoining to these?" said I; "possibly some person is concealed in them?"

"No, no," replied the old man, very much agitated. "Beyond that wall, where the picture of the black and white knights is hung, are the ranges of the eastern



wing; it is impossible any person could have entered there; and on the other side are the chambers of this suit; leading to which they must pass your apartment."

I endeavored to impute the voice we had heard to our own heated imagination; though, at the same time, I did not conceive how it was possible the same delusion should deceive us all. It was with difficulty we prevailed on the old man to proceed—pausing at every sentence, to listen.

"After this terrible threat, Don Padilla commanded me to assist him in carrying his new bride to her chamber; swearing that all the fiends in hell should not deprive him of his prize, much less the perturbed spirit of a man murdered by robbers. I would have interposed with an observation, that my lady was in no fit state to become a bridal chamber; and that I doubted much if she ever recovered.

"Fool! driveling idiot!" cried he knitting his brows. "I ask thee not advice—living or dead, all the fiends in hell shall not deprive me of her!"

"Such, senors, was the marriage of Lady Zidana, whose picture Fernando wears. From that hour she never recovered her spirits; and Don Padilla, after the birth of Lady Almira, became disgusted at her reserve, and evidently hated her more than he had ever loved her."

"What became of the daughter of Count Ferendez?" said Fernando.

"Don Padilla, after a very little time, found means to place her out at Grenada; and till my lady's death, it was believed she was well provided for; but, since then, I have never heard other than an uncertain report of her death; but, how, Heaven alone can tell—or Don Padilla."

"Ha! I am certain I heard a noise," cried Fernando.

"Thou shalt not go unrewarded!" said the voice we had before heard, and which threw us into the greatest consternation.

We sought in vain to discover the mystery; sounding the walls to see where they were hollow, and examining every place where concealment was possible. There remained no longer a doubt but we had been observed and overheard and that by an enemy; but who it could possibly be, we had no means to discover.

Gonzalez was very much affected, and we had much difficulty to tranquilize his terror, by assurance of our protection, let what would happen.

"I have," said he, "this consolation, that my intentions are just; and I will trust that Heaven will not suffer the guilty always to triumph."

"You are very right," replied I; "virtue and a right intention, will preserve us tranquil amidst danger; nor will Providence fail to bring vengeance on the guilty. Go now to rest, my good Gonzalez; your years require the nourishment of sleep; we are young and inured to hardship; we will watch—and if this intruder dares to appear, he will find that though weak, I have yet a soldier's arm!"

"Yes, yes," said Fernando, "an arm that has already dispatched one murderer to his grave, and, I trust, would not fail in combating another."

After Gonzalez had retired, we spent several hours in reflecting and conversing on the singular and almost incredible events we had heard.

It appeared clear that Don Padilla had been an actor in the tragedy of Count Ferendez; it was creditable that passion might instigate him to the murder of his friend; but here were others which arose in strange and fearful array.

The death of Emira appeared more than suspicious—the sudden disappearance of Pedro and Teresa was equally unaccountable. His cruelty to Lady Zidana and her daughter, of whose fate we were ignorant, raised our detestation. But, though we could easily allow for any extravagance of human passion, our belief was staggered, and our senses confounded, when the wandering spirit of Count Ferendez crossed our thoughts; and we should have treated the whole as a chimera, had not our own experience staggered all the effects of a liberal education.

Fernando remained with me during the night, but it passed without interruption. On the following day, the body of the ruffian Lopez was buried on the spot where he had fallen; he having been for several days exposed to the view of visitants, that he might be claimed if known; but no owner could be discovered, nor any news learned of his companion, who had made good his retreat so secretly, that, from the imperfect description I could give, no information could be gathered.

## CHAPTER VI.

'Tis gone!

'Twas but my fancy, or perhaps the wind  
Forcing its entrance throu' some hollow cavern;  
No matter what—I feel my eyes grow weary.

Shakespeare.

On the fifth day of my residence in the Castle of Montillo, I found myself so much recovered, that I ventured in the evening to walk in the garden, accompanied by Fernando and the ladies.

They seemed to take pleasure in leading us over this elegant little place, where a variety of exotic plants, with flowers from Peru and Mexico, flourished as in their native climes. Aromatic shrubs from Arabia were planted in *parterres*, and filled the air with the most delightful perfume; a clear and winding rill watered the groves, inviting to repose by its murmuring sound, and tempting the feet to rove amid the freshness of evergreens. At the end of a grove of orange and citron trees was a small arbor, formed of marble pillars, clear and beautiful as the Parian stone; between these was a curious latticework of gilt canes, which admitted at once the air and the light.

Roses and jessamines were entwined in the network;

and Persian geraniums, which yield a musky scent, crept along the base.

In this beautiful arbor were several fine paintings on fanciful subjects; and cushions of crimson velvet invited to repose.

"It is here," said Almira, "that my sister and I often pass the evening. How do you approve of our taste, cavalier?"

"Nothing," replied I, "can be more charming! On the right we see only objects of beauty, flowers interspersed with fruits and shrubs; on the left the mountains of Morena rear up their frowning heads; and the turrets of the castle loom over the deep forest. Before us runs the limpid brook, bubbling over pebbles it has polished to brightness. The air perfumed breathes freshness through these living lattices; but the most beautiful of nature's productions are the fair nymphs which presided in the temple."

Virginia replied only with a look and a blush; but Almira, laughing, answered, "You are extremely polite, senor! but what is your opinion of those nymphs, cousin?"

Fernando replied, "My opinion is perfectly the same. Yet to my taste, there is something yet wanting to relieve the silence of the scene. Music, such as we heard the other night from some unseen performers, would render this a little fairy temple."

"If that be all," replied Almira, with an obliging air, "it would be a pity you should not be satisfied with our favorite place. Sister, sing him the ballad that belongs to the painting there, facing the door, of the lady walking upon the sea."

"That is too long, sister," replied Virginia. "Beside, it is a doleful ditty, and fit only for melancholy people."

"Then pray oblige me with it," said Fernando.

"Are you then melancholy?" asked Virginia. "I thought nobody could be sad but those who belonged to this castle."

"And why, cousin," said I, "should the inhabitants of this castle be more melancholy than others? Believe me, there are many heavy hearts under light countenances."

"Well, well," cried Almira, "that we do not doubt. Let us now have the song, sister; we will accompany it with our instruments. It is a very old story, cavaliers; we learned it from a wandering ballad singer, who learned it from a Scotch prisoner at carthagens, and we made it the subject of that picture, where you see the lady walking on the waves, near those frightful rocks, almost as frightful as the black mountains above us."

After some little persuasion, Virginia tuned her lute, and accompanied by her sister on a guitar, entertained us with the simple ballad, of which this is the copy:

## HIALMER AND GERTRUDE.

A SCOTTISH BALLAD.

Softly dashed the pensive ocean,  
Gently sighed the passing gale,  
To the rocks the flushing motion  
Seemed to tell the plaintive tale.

When a maid, at eve retiring,  
Strayed along the sandy shore,  
And the lamp of day expiring,  
Shed its glad'ning light no more.

Wanton in the wind and cheerless  
Flowed her loose and lovely hair;  
Mild her look; but, ah! how peerless  
Every motion of the fair!

Dressed in weeds of saddest sable,  
Dressed in robes of mourning hue!  
(Weeds to tell the mind unable,  
Speak alone the sorrow due.)

Now she paused in thoughtful sadness,  
Round she glanced her trembling eye,  
Wild as touched with kindling madness  
Frowning at the low'ring sky.

Now advancing quick, now slowly,  
Sudden starts betray her mind,  
Then she to the ground bent lowly  
List'ning to the sighing wind.

On a rock that rough projected,  
Where the ragged camphire grew  
And the blackened steep erected  
Barriers to the rising view.

Careless sat the lovely maiden,  
Careless on the sea-beat shore;  
Sick at heart, with grief o'erladen,  
She ne'er heard the waters roar.

"Here," she cried, "he used to meet me  
On this rock Hialmer brave,  
 Oft at eve was wont to greet me,  
 Ere he tried the treach'rous wave.

O! my loved Hialmer never,  
Never shall my soul forego  
Those fond ties that death would sever  
With the ruthless grasp of woe.

Love our hearts with bonds united,  
Pure as is celestial flame;  
Sacred as the truth we plighted,  
In the holy Virgin's name.

Cruel, cruel death! to sunder  
Two whose hearts together grew,  
Could not some less noble plunder  
Satisfy thy greedy view!

Brave and noble was my lover,  
Bravest of the mountain's brown;  
Terror filled the lawless rover,  
Shrinking from his threatening frown.

When the winds blew black and cheerless,  
Howling o'er the heathy waste,  
Then Hialmer, lone and fearless,  
O'er the sword the robber traced.

Oft at midnight has he sallied  
On the proud and Danish foe;  
 Oft his country's courage rallied,  
To return their vengeful blow.

Caledonia long shall mourn him  
(He of all her chiefs the pride),  
All their prayers can ne'er return him,  
Ne'er restore him to his bride.

He pursued the Danes embattled,  
O'er the black and faithless waves;  
Bark to bark the lances rattled,  
Wounds and death the warrior braves.

Nor could stay the direful clangor,  
Naught the rage that Scotia fired,  
Burning with revengful anger,  
In the waves the Danes expired.

But the battle gained and over,  
Round the victors tempests sweep,  
Furious spirits o'er them hover,  
Adding terrors to the deep.

Oh, my loved Hialmer, hear me!  
Hear me in the silent main;  
With thy wonted accents cheer me,  
From the green and liquid plain.

Ah! what voice, or whispering spirit,  
Does thy Gertrude faintly call?  
Who can sounds like these inherit,  
Sounds that tremble as they fall?

Thrice it Gertrude called, and sighing,  
Thrice it beckoned to the maid;  
Gertrude, with the call complying,  
Hastened to the well-known shade.

O'er the briny sands long pacing,  
Where the seaweeds gently waved,  
Still the rocky mazes tracing,  
By the rising billows laved.

She pursued the warrior, fleeting  
Through the shades that night o'erspread,  
Till the tide denied retreating,  
And the rocks hung o'er her head.

Here she sudden paused, and bending  
To the wild and frightened maid,  
"Gertrude! Gertrude! this the ending,  
This our bed of love," he said.

"Here beneath the waves translucent,  
Many a spirit happy dwells.  
Amber groves, and domes pellucid,  
Deck'd with weeds and glitt'ring shells.

"From retreats, where sea-nymphs daily  
Hymn their songs of love and war,  
And the wand'ring spirits gaily  
Join in chorus from afar.

Haste then, Gertrude, haste my dearest,  
'Tis Hialmer bids thee come;  
Is it death, or waves, thou fearest  
In thy passage to the tomb?"

Gradual then the spirit sinking,  
Beckoned with deceitful smile,  
Gazing wild, no longer thinking,  
Loosened sands her feet beguile.

Plunging in the sorrowing ocean,  
Ev'ry sense of danger fled;  
And the waves' returning motion  
Closed forever o'er her head.

Oft when moonlight's pensive luster  
Trembles on the curling pool,  
And the winds have ceased to bluster  
Sighing faint at evening cool.

Hand in hand, are seen to wander,  
O'er the deep these spirits dear;  
As the billows smooth meander,  
Now are seen, now disappear.

Or when black'ning tempests roaring,  
Threat to wash the bending skies;  
Gertrude's spirit loud deploring,  
Warns the seamen with her cries.

The air of this ballad was simple and pathetic; it reminded me of the stories of ancient times, when hapless maids had too frequently to deplore the sudden chances of a barbarous warfare. The subject of this tale afforded us matter for conversation; and we forgot the hours as they passed, till the sun had withdrawn his last ray, and left us in the stillness and soberness of night.

Almira then played us the evening hymn, while I sat with Virginia, leaning against the lattice frame, and reflecting on the probability that not many days would part us; and that I knew not if we should ever meet again. I sighed deeply at this reflection. Virginia looked upon me with an expression that



penetrated my heart, and spoke more than many sentences.

"Ah! my fair cousin," said I, taking her hand, when her sister had ceased to play, "what a delicious scene would this be if it were not transitory. My soul feels itself, and would willingly remain here, but how soon must it tear itself away!"

"And must you soon leave us?" said she, with a half-suppressed sigh. "Yes," replied he; "I am not ignorant, Virginia, of your father's disposition—it will be impossible we should remain after his arrival."

"Most true," returned she, looking down. "My father will be very angry that you were ever admitted; but he did not see you pale, bleeding, and wounded, or his heart might have pitied you."

"And did your heart then pity me, Virginia?" said I, with a feeling I had never before experienced, and which now I cannot define. I felt her hand flutter as I held it, but she returned me no answer; and, in that moment, I formed the determination of making her my wife.

Almira endeavored, by a thousand little arts, to engage Fernando in particular conversation; but he had too much experience of the world not to perceive her partiality, and too much honor to encourage what he had no inclination to return. The charms he had painted in possessing an original, such as the picture of Lady Zidana, rendered all others insipid; though he would at times join with me in ridiculing such a fancy. Beside, there appeared in his eyes too much of Don Padilla in the features of Almira. But I see my dear marquis, I must be delicate on this point; and perhaps it is well for you both, Fernando did not see with your eyes.

I endeavored, during this conversation, to strike out some means of corresponding with Virginia, when I should be in Madrid; but none appeared possible, unless through the hands of Gonzalez—and I much doubted whether he would venture. It was easy to perceive that the interruption of last night had sat heavy on his mind; and he, no doubt, reproached himself with having inadvertently betrayed a secret, which for so many years he had carefully guarded; and which, if known, would expose him to the worst vengeance of his master. I did not dare mention these suggestions to Virginia, much less the secret which related to her father; for, though both sisters wondered and lamented at his melancholy and morose disposition, they were far from entertaining any of those suspicions, which, in our eyes, appeared certainties.

It was almost dark before we could think of returning to the castle. Whilst we remained at supper, some dispatches arrived from Tolosa relative to the troops, which I gave Fernando instructions how to answer; and a private letter from my mother, which I retired to my chamber to read.

It contained a long detail of my father's sufferings during his last illness, his frequent wishes for my presence, and many family particulars, which required my speedy return to Madrid.

I became quite melancholy at the sorrowful sentiments it contained; and my mind giving itself up to a long series of thinking, I found my spirits become so dejected, that I knew not how to account for it.

Undoubtedly this imbecility of mind was principally occasioned by love. I know of no passion that more relaxes the mind, its chief pleasure consists in solitude and contemplation; to this I might add my mother's letter, which so unmanned me, that a thousand fancies floated in my brain.

The moon slowly advanced over the dark waving forest, and shed its beams through my casement. I arose from my chair to meditate on the solemn view, when nature enjoyed repose. The dark scenery, which in one huge mass extended before the window, spread over me a sensation of awe; and, for a time, I remained struck with the sublimity of my imagination. A faint and distant light aroused my attention; it moved slowly amongst the trees, and seemed to approach the castle.

I fancied I could perceive the figure of a man, whose ghastly features were shaded into horror by the dim light which he carried. He bent beneath a load, which seemed to own the human form; and the thought crossed my mind that it might possibly be the assassin Jacques, carrying away the dead body of his comrade, when he could venture with safety to tear it from the ground.

Something of fear crept over me at the remembrance of that eventful night, when I had so strangely received warning of my father's death, and so nearly received my own. I could not wholly avoid apprehension at the distant sight of a man, whose dealings in blood I had so much reason to know; and I watched his motions with anxiety. The distance deprived me of certainty, and I lost him in an angle of the garden wall, along which he seemed to have taken his course.

I was greatly disturbed at this incident, as I knew not but I might run some danger from the revenge of this villain, who could not be ignorant of my residence in the castle. I leaned upon the casement of the window, revolving a thousand ideas; by degrees my mind assumed its tone, from reflecting, that this same power which had hitherto, might continue to protect me.

The gentle sighs of the wind, which scarce waved the tops of the trees, seemed to whisper sad sounds; and I enjoyed in ecstasy the pleasing sensations that crept over me. "Now," thought I, "if some heavenly choristers were to tune their instruments, and, in sweet hymning, warble some celestial song, could the abodes of Paradise furnish a more pleasing pleasure?"

I listened, as if expecting some strain would reach me on the breeze—but the wind came, and sighing passed away. A few stars glittered in the firmament, and I gazed upon them with awful satisfaction. "How magnificent is all this!" said I to myself; "worlds roll

upon worlds, and harmony guides their course! What, then, is man, little and insignificant man, amidst all the grandeur of creation?"

My heart became heavy at this reflection. I withdrew from the window, and sat down upon a chair, leaning with my arms upon a table—every noise in the castle was hushed into silence. I remained fixed in my situation, having no inclination to sleep, and enjoying the sadness that hung in clouds over me—when the clock struck twelve, reverberating with solemn sounds through the castle.

It reminded me of the eventful incident Gonzalez had repeated, and I looked round with a sort of expectation, that some fearful form would start upon me through the duskiness of my chamber; for I had no other light than the rays of the moon, which scarcely rendered objects visible.

A partial ray fell upon an old picture, which hung on the side of the room that faced me. It was an ancient battle piece, in which a tournament was exhibited before a lady, who stood by herself in the gallery of an interior court, the sole witness and arbiter of merit. The knights were, one of them in black, the other in white armor. The black knight had driven his lance into the body of his opponent, and the blood trickled down the side of the white horse, on which the white knight rode. The light of the moon but faintly showed the coloring; and I remained leaning on the table, with my eyes fixed upon the body of the falling knight.

While I thus continued to gaze, I fancied that the canvas moved, and that the wounded knight retreated backwards from the black knight who pressed upon him.

The white knight continued slowly to retreat, and the black knight moved some paces backwards, as if to give velocity to his next onset. The delusion of my imagination was such, that I did not perceive that the whole canvas slid back, parting in the center, till my eyes were struck with the figure of a man standing in the vacancy. He looked into the chamber with caution; while his murderous countenance gleamed with a smile of malice, highly raised by the red glare of a lamp he held in his left hand—his right containing a poniard, on which my fancy (in the moment) observed marks of blood.

My hair almost stood erect on my head, and my blood ran chill to my heart, as I gazed upon the horrid specter, without power to move, or to determine whether it were human or no.

He looked in my chamber with an inquiring eye, and particularly towards the bed; which, standing at the opposite end of the room, prevented his perceiving me, as I sat in the shade. Hearing no sound, and not seeing my lamp burning, he ventured slowly to step out into the room—the opening reaching within two feet of the floor. He advanced with a slow pace towards the bed, pausing to listen, the dagger raised in his hand. He stood over the bed a minute, while a ghastly grin of satisfaction spread over his livid features, his eyes sparkled, and he raised his arm to plunge the poniard into his fancied victim.

I now clearly understood this was no incorporeal specter. I was so overcome with the sense of the unexpected danger I had so narrowly escaped, that I groaned aloud; and, starting up with sudden animation, I rushed forward, drawing my sword in an instant. Had I proceeded with more caution, I might have laid him dead at my feet without his having any power to assault me; he being only armed with a short poniard. Alarmed by the noise I made, his countenance changed, and starting round he beheld my glittering sword within a yard of his throat.

He gave a sudden and masterly spring to one side, by which he avoided the sweep of my weapon; nor did he stay to hazard a second stroke, leaping through the aperture, where he narrowly missed being cut in two; the point of my sword dividing the leathern belt he had round him.

I did not hesitate about following him through the private passage, along which he ran with surprising swiftness, continuing to carry the lamp.

Notwithstanding my arm was not yet perfectly recovered, I sensibly gained upon him, and should have overtaken him, had he not extinguished the lamp, involving the narrow passage in total darkness.

I had now everything to fear, if at that moment I could have been capable of any fear; because, nothing was more easy than for this assassin to wait his opportunity in the dark.

I listened, to mark which way his footsteps tended still following, my sword extended at arm's length, and parrying from side to side, that he might not slip by me, and cut off my retreat.

I continued to follow till I found myself in a large hall, where the moonbeams faintly shone upon the ponderous furniture, without serving to distinguish particular objects—the window being of stained glass.

I now paused; for I had lost the sound of his footsteps, and I fancied that the villain had sheltered himself in some corner, or behind the furniture, and might dart upon me without my having power to ward the unseen stroke of death.

The hall was at a considerable distance from my chamber; and now, when the ardor of the chase was over, I felt the full danger of my situation; exposed in a place of which I was wholly ignorant, and having near me a man who had the darkest intentions, and scrupled not at the means of executing them, I wondered that he had not used firearms, which he was probably only prevented from by the apprehension of raising the servants.

I shuddered at retracing the bewildering labyrinth I had just trodden, and it was almost equally dangerous to remain where I was. From this remote situation it was impossible to alarm the people of the castle, and I stood for some time in a gloomy suspense.

At length I reflected, that though the moon at present glimmered through the windows and prevented

total darkness, it would, in a short time, sink from that side of the building, and leave me exposed to dangers I should have no means to repel.

I turned round to seek the passage to my own chamber, when I fancied I could distinguish the obscure figure of a man stealing along the wall. I started forward, but he eluded my blow, and fled again through an opposite door. I had no doubt but that I should now overtake him and I continued to pursue till his footsteps were again lost, no longer echoing through the winding passages.

No pale beam of light shone upon the darkness around me, and I turned to retrace my way with caution, every step expecting to meet with the point of his dagger; nothing being more easy than for him to fall upon me by surprise.

I had no means to distinguish whether the way I took was right; and after winding about through several chambers, in the place of returning to the great hall, I found myself at the top of a staircase, which, by the faint light of the moon, I did not remember ever to have seen. I made no doubt but I was now on the eastern side of the castle, from whence it would be impossible to return by any of the great galleries, the terminating doors being always locked. I had now bewildered myself so much, that I had lost the clew to those secret ways by which I had entered.

Under these circumstances it became indifferent which way I should proceed, and I descended the stairs. I then found myself upon the ground floor, which, as well as I could distinguish, was paved with marble. The moon had passed to the other side of the horizon, and left this part of the castle in darkness. I went on, and found several doors leading into suits of chambers, all of which were fastened.

About half way along the passage, I found one which stood half open. Without reflecting that it could not possibly lead me to the inhabited part of the castle, I ventured in, but was soon stopped by an opposite door, the key of which was in the lock. I opened it, the hinges grating harshly with the rust they had gathered, and so damp a vapor issued forth, that I remained some minutes before I durst venture to enter. I then found myself in a small chamber, the walls of which I could reach round with my sword extended. I moved slowly forward, and entered another room, which was much larger, and led into a fourth room, the opposite door of which was locked, and, like the second, the key remained.

I judged from the length of these rooms that I had crossed the base of the eastern wing, and that this door would lead me into the gardens. This circumstance caused me to pause, from a certain reflection which occurred, that the assassin who had entered my chamber was no other than Jacques; and that through these doors and chambers he had found admission to the castle, locking them after him.

I was pleased with this idea, and resolving to quit this wing of the building, and secure the entrance, I turned the key and opened the door, when I found myself in another room instead of the garden I had expected; but this disappointment at that time was absorbed in a greater and a more terrible feeling.

The moonbeams shone full through the opposite window, reflecting on the objects before me. I fixed my eyes for a moment on the most horrible sight I had ever beheld—a sight which chilled the circling blood in my veins, and overspread my soul with horror.

I recoiled suddenly back, and drawing the door firmly to, with an impulse of terror, it closed with a thundering sound, that echoed hollow, and ran along the whole pile of building.

I stood some time in the most cruel agony of suspense; when reasoning myself into better judgment, I endeavored again to open the door that I might be certain what I had seen was no delusion, and that my mind might not remain with an image upon it of what was most terrible and detestable in human nature.

All my efforts were in vain, the door was firmly fastened, and a loud cry within but too surely convinced me that I had witnessed no illusion.

I returned with an uneven step to the long passage in front of these chambers. The variety of exertion I had undergone rendered me extremely weary, and the horrid object which my eyes had beheld, exhausted my strength so much, that when I had with difficulty ascended half way up the great stairs, I was obliged to sit down overcome with weakness.

In that situation I resolved to await the return of morning; it being impossible that anyone could approach me from above or below, without my hearing the sound of their footsteps.

I had not sat long before my mind, weary and agitated, sunk into a disturbed and confused sleep. I dreamed that I was in bed in my own chamber, and that some one pulled me by the arm so that I awoke, and perceived Virginia smiling upon me. "Follow me, Albert," said she; "my sister has already taken the vows, and I am going to receive the veil—come and be witness to the ceremony."

I thought I started up, very much afflicted at such a summons, when I beheld on the other side of me, a person wrapped wholly in long black clothes, so that I could distinguish neither form nor feature, other than that the outline seemed human. I looked at Virginia as much as to inquire who it could be? She smiled upon me with ineffable sweetness—"Make no inquiries about him," said she; "follow me! and I charge you as you value your life and my love, that you do not look behind you."

I fancied that I followed as she directed; but by one of these sudden transitions we experience in dream, I found myself, I knew not how, in a churchyard, Virginia still before me. I felt a strong inclination to look round, that I might see if the same dark form followed us, but her words checked me. "This," said she, solemnly, "is my grave." On a sudden she began to



ascend into the air—I found myself rise, I knew not how, but it was without exertion on my part.

Virginia's robes, which were of white, now seemed to unfold and spread upon the air for many yards, and I perceived round her waist a zone of sparkling diamonds. The vast vault of the heavens seemed of a deeper blue, the earth diminished, and the stars increased in brilliancy and magnitude, appearing as so many suns.

I felt myself ravished at the beauties that surrounded me. "Surely," thought I, "that dark being cannot have followed us to this admirable place?" Forgetting the injunction I had received, I inadvertently turned round my head, and beheld, with an inexpressible dread which overpowered me, the figure of a skeleton, in appearance glowing like a furnace, with black robes streaming in the wind, and waving round him like clouds.

I found myself falling, and caught hold of Virginia's garments to save me; I dragged her down with myself, but as we fell I fancied that she was suddenly changed into Almira, and tearing her robes from me, she mounted far from my sight. Loud thunders broke round me on every side—the beaming suns became black as night—while I was precipitating thousands of miles to the earth; where I fainted away, and believed myself dead.

When I recovered from this singular dream, which was not for some time after I actually believed that what I had experienced was truth, I stretched out my hands with a doubt of my own existence; my whole body was bedewed with a cold sweat, and, opening my eyes, I beheld the day shining around me.

It was some time before I recovered the perfect use of my reason; and then I perceived that I had in my sleep fallen down the stairs, and I imputed the thunder I had heard, to the noise of my falling, as I rolled from step to step.

My strength was so much exhausted that I could scarcely stand; and I made no doubt, but I had fainted away in my sleep. I was endeavoring to ascend the stairs, when hearing a noise above me, I looked up, and beheld Fernando at the top, whose countenance expressed his wonder and surprise.

He flew towards me, alarmed at my apparent weakness and haggard looks; and, inquiring where I was wounded, began to support me up the stairs.

"My dear friend," said I, "be not apprehensive on that account, I am not otherwise hurt than by excessive fright and fatigue. I have been witness to the most horrible of actions, and dreamed a dream, that hath harrowed up my soul, and reduced me to this weakness. But how came you to follow me hither?"

"I went," said he, "to your chamber, to invite you to a morning's walk in the garden; when I was confounded with finding you not in your own room; and, observing the opening made by the removal of the tournament, I immediately concluded that the intruder of the former night had paid you a visit, and that you had detected him. I saw also that you had not been in bed, which told me that you must have been long absent, and I began to fear the worst of accidents. I did not remain long considering what I should do—a soldier, you know, must be prompt in decision, and the way was open before me—I took down your pistols, and with one in each hand entered the passage.

"I continued along its obscure and narrow windings till it opened behind a chair of state whose drapery and hangings concealed the entrance. I then found myself in a large antique hall, the windows of which were of painted glass. In the middle of the hall stood the large tables and seats in confusion—dishes and goblets covered with dust, remained upon the tables, the visible vestiges of a feast—and I cast a suspicious glance around me, at remembering the strange interruption on the wedding of Don Padilla and Lady Zidana.

"I pictured to myself the scene of gay festivity, the exultation of Padilla, and the joy of his guests, which, in one moment, must have been converted into utter dismay, and have unbent the determination of any other man. I had not much time to bestow on these meditations, as no sound or trace appeared which could point out the way you had taken. A little door at the opposite end standing open, invited me to enter; and, after passing through a variety of chambers, where all the old furniture remained covered with cobwebs and dust, I at length reached the head of the stairs, and am rejoiced that my fears are not altogether realized."

It required almost half an hour to return through the intricate windings, and I found myself too ill, at the time, to enter upon particular details. We could have but one opinion of the person who had so clandestinely entered my chamber. Nothing was more probable than that Jacques, who had wounded me in the wood, knew of some secret entrance into that desolate quarter of the castle, where he might best find retreat from the search made after him; and prompted by revenge for the death of his comrade, mingled with fear for himself, from what I had overheard, was resolved to destroy me.

We considered whether it would be prudent to mention in the castle what had occurred, and cause that part of the building to be searched; but it struck us that, strangers as we were, we had no authority for such proceedings; and it would be needlessly alarming the ladies with dismal apprehensions. We therefore judged it better to remain silent, and provide for any attempt that villainy or malice might suggest against us.

At first we intended imparting to Gonzales the real cause of the interruption he had met in his narrative; but his years had weakened his firmness; and his fears of Padilla's revenge being over most strong, we determined to hold him in ignorance, and to watch by ourselves, well armed, on the following night.

## CHAPTER VII.

O now forever

Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content.

Shakespeare.

HAVING taken some refreshment, I laid down to tranquilize the ferment of my spirits, and if possible to forget the terrific object I had seen in the moonlight chamber, as well as the phantoms of my dream which haunted me.

Meanwhile Fernando, after replacing the picture, and fastening it, so as it should not be opened without awakening me, went to make my excuses to the ladies, by informing them, that the letters I had received from Madrid, had detained me so far in the night, that I found myself not sufficiently well to rise before noon, when, for the first time, I would join them in the family dining-room.

I arose much refreshed at noon, and joined this agreeable party; but I could not at once shake off the disquiet which preyed upon me.

The sight of Virginia seemed even to increase it; as her looks and accents every instant recalled the visions of my slumbers.

The afternoon was passed in little entertainments of music and singing; for, notwithstanding the heat of the weather, we were too much satisfied with our society to separate; and some fragrant fruits, presented us by Gonzales, greatly refreshed us.

Fernando, to be more at ease, had unloosed his waistcoat, and the picture which he always wore, attracted the eye of Almira.

"Ah! ha! cavalier," said she, feigning to laugh, "that I suppose is the portrait of some favorite lady? Will you permit me to see your choice?"

Fernando could not avoid giving the picture into her hands, which she no sooner saw, than she exclaimed:

"Holy Virgin! senor, how came you to wear the picture of my mother? Tell me, did you ever see her?"

To these questions Fernando replied: "That he knew not till lately the resemblance, and merely wore it by way of ornament; that he never had the happiness of seeing the lady, her mother; and that he wondered how she herself should know the likeness, since, to the best of his recollection, she was an infant when her mother died."

"That is very true," replied she, with a sigh. "Though children of different mothers, neither of us ever knew the blessings of maternal affection; indeed, so obscure is the death of these dear relations, that we know little more of them than their pictures inform us. You shall visit our gallery of family paintings, and then you shall compare the likenesses; but I must confess a miniature softens down the countenance, and makes the face appear handsomer."

"This lady is exquisitely handsome," answered Fernando; "what think you, cousin (turning to Virginia)? See how admirably the Moorish habit becomes her! In my opinion, were she no relation of mine, the painting merits preservation."

"Come, sister," said Almira, "let us show the cavaliers the pictures; I know they will be entertained."

"But do you not remember," said Virginia, "that our father has forbid us to go there without him? When he returns the cavaliers can attend him, and he can give them the whole history."

"But would he give us the history?" cried Fernando, his eyes sparkling with meaning. "Think you that he—"

I interrupted him, by expressing a wish to see these pictures, which I had not done before, and to prevent the ladies from observing any singularity in my friend's meaning, I observed that, perhaps, Don Padilla was choice of them; that he feared they might be injured if visited in his absence.

I saw that Virginia wavered in her own mind—wishing to oblige us, and yet fearing to disobey her father; but the arguments of her sister at last overcame her scruples. Gonzales was sent for to bring the keys.

The old man was not satisfied at the summons, and he ventured to express as much.

"You know, my honored ladies," said he, "that his excellency would be displeased, were he to come to the knowledge of your having broken his orders; and I am sure the cavaliers (looking at us) would not wish any words should arise from their curiosity."

"Nonsense," replied Almira; "do you not know that my father is many miles distant?—and how should he ever know that we just went into the room and out again?"

"Ah, lady!" replied Gonzales, "many an action more secret than this, has been published by the winds."

"Do not let us go, sister; we had better not," said Virginia.

"Just as you please, my dear," replied Almira; Gonzales talks as if it was a mighty crime; but, for my part, if the cavaliers will attend me, I will show the pictures myself. Give me the keys, Gonzales; I wonder what harm we shall do to inanimate canvases?"

Fernando and myself made some faint opposition, though we, in fact, could not conceive that any ill could arise from so innocent a cause.

"Well," said Gonzales, "if you are determined to go, there are the keys; but you must not insist upon my attendance—I know my duty better."

As he pronounced the last sentence, he looked towards us with an expression of meaning I could not comprehend, and taking the hand of Virginia, she reluctantly accompanied us to the picture gallery.

Almira drew up the curtains, and engaged our attention by a comparison of the two pictures. I admired the resemblance Lady Emira bore to Virginia; and though my friend gave the preference to Lady Zidana, I could not agree with him—she wanted the clear carnated complexion, which I always preferred to a brunette.

We had been about half an hour employed in the

gallery, and Gonzales entered in haste and perturbation.

"Haste instantly away!" cried he. "Return this moment, I beseech you, in the dining-room."

"But why so much hurry?" said I.

"We are undone!" cried he; "the most unforeseen circumstance! Hasten away this moment!"

We implicitly obeyed him, though ignorant of his reasons; and, locking the door, he hurried down the back stairs, bidding us not tarry till we got to the dining-room.

"What do you think of this interruption?" said I; "what can possibly have thrown the old man into such a tremor?"

"O! I know not," said Virginia; "but I can scarcely breathe with apprehension."

Fernando broke out into a laugh. "Ridiculous, my dear cousin!" said he; "why should you be so apprehensive? This old fellow has a mind to punish us for presuming to differ in opinion from himself; depend on it, you will find the whole a trick of his invention."

"I fear not," answered Virginia; "Gonzales is not of a light disposition. I never knew him jest in my life."

"Here comes one that does just," said Fernando.

"Here, Hugo! where are you running in such haste?"

"O, senors!" cried Hugo, out of breath, "such a surprise! I am all, as one may say, out of sorts—I should as soon have expected to be hanged!"

"That you are very likely to be," said Fernando; "but you should not be in haste to the gallows. Say, then, where were you running, and what has happened?"

"I only heard it by the way," said he, "and ran away directly to tell my fellow-servants, who were all at sixes and sevens, and no more expected."

"Tedious fellow!" cried Fernando: "what is it you are chattering about?—what did you hear?—what did you not expect?"

"Why, I did not expect to meet you in an ill humor, senors, and what I heard I believe to be true, and that makes me in such haste to repeat it."

"It is to no purpose," said I, "that we trifle with this fellow. Hugo knows you are not his master, and he takes liberties."

"I have no doubts," answered Fernando, "but my first suspicions were true and this fellow was sent purposely to heighten our apprehension."

I gave credit myself to this suggestion, and we walked leisurely on till we came to the dining-room. Almira entered first, but she started back with a scream, and all pressed forward to see the object of her dismay. We were struck dumb at sight of Don Padilla, who, by our delay, had time to enter the dining-room before us.

He was pacing the room, his brows bent into the severest frown I had ever beheld. You have seen, marquise, what a gloomy mortal he usually is—but then he looked mischief personified.

Virginia half ran towards him, but he did not deign to notice her; and her courage failing, she was obliged to lean upon my arm to a chair. Almira was very little better, stammering out something about surprise at his sudden return, which he did not think worthy of answer.

In this unpleasant situation we remained for some minutes. The color went and came alternately in the cheeks of my friend; and fearing that his feelings might betray him into rashness, I summoned up my resolution and suppressed my pride at this cavalier treatment.

"Don Padilla," said I, "you are, perhaps, as much surprised at finding unexpected visitors in your castle, as these ladies are at your return without notice, that they might have prepared to receive you in a more suitable manner." Still he remained silent, and I went on.

"I can assure you, that this intrusion of ours upon your hospitality, was by no means from a trivial motive; and I should wish—"

He stopped, and stood opposite me, fixing his eyes upon me while I continued: "And I should wish, that the obligation I have received from your family in your absence, may be the means of prompting a more extensive intercourse in future."

"Who are you?" said he, contemptuously.

"Whoever I am," replied I coolly, "give me leave to say, Don Padilla, I know who you are!"

A malicious smile bent his features. "You know who I am!" said he: "be so good as to explain who that is."

I had already condemned myself for my haste; and now replied, with a bow:

"The father of these ladies; and as such entitled to my esteem, as I shall forever remember the infinite debt of gratitude I owe them."

"So shall I," replied he. "But who is your comrade?"

Fernando, who has not the same measures to keep as I, and who had listened with a burning spirit to the altercation, replied with a high and stern voice:

"Don Padilla! it is for miscreants, murderers and assassins to have comrades! You ask who I am? At present I am a stranger; but you shall one day know me! The man who could trample upon the claims of friendship may well be excused the rights of hospitality!"

"Ha!" cried Padilla, a livid tinge coloring his features, "am I betrayed?"

"Your fears betray you," replied Fernando. "Quilt will render ruffians cowards!"

"What do you aim at by such an epithet?" cried he, stamping upon the ground. "Am I betrayed by my own people?—betrayed into the hands of a desperado, an adventurer! Here, help! help!"

At these words he drew, and made a push at Fernando. Virginia fainted away. Almira uttered a loud scream, and caught the left arm of her father, while I ran to separate the combatants, who eyed each other with inveterate fury.



The servants who had heard their master's cries, rushed into the room; but being unarmed, I held them at bay with the point of my sword, while Padilla, almost choked with madness, commanded them to seize Fernando.

"This is an extremely foolish business on all parts," cried I. "Don Padilla, you must allow this is a shameful outrage upon persons of our quality; and you, Fernando Coello, govern your resentment."

"Is this Fernando Coello?" said Padilla suddenly.

"Yes," replied I, "it is your nephew, the son of your sister Isabella. Surely you will not treat him thus on his first visit? Servants, you may retire."

Don Padilla did not contradict my order; he sat down in gloomy silence, and my friend, sheathing his sword, placed himself in a chair, playing with the hilt, without noticing the situation of the ladies. Virginia yet remained upon the floor, and her sister hung over her uttering the most piercing cries.

Agatha, the ladies' attendant, entered with some essence and water, and I flew to assist in recovering Virginia. Don Padilla eyed my attention without speaking; he seemed revolving in his mind matters of greater moment—now looking at Fernando, and then upon me.

When Virginia recovered, he ordered his daughters to retire; and then, in a tone of greater complacency, inquired my name and quality; and how I had met with the accident in the forest, which he had slightly heard from the servants.

I replied that I was the Marquis Albert de Donia; that my mother was sister to his first wife, Lady Emira.

The color rose in his face, at this remark; but, biting his lips he remained silent.

I had every reason to believe that the assassin Jacques had held some correspondence with Padilla; in which case to appear too ignorant was as dangerous as knowing too much. I therefore observed that, having been benighted in the wood, I had clambered a tree to sleep, when I was suddenly awakened by the sound of voices beneath me. "I insist upon it," said one, "he shall not live (Don Padilla started)—are we to take pay for nothing; I scorn it, Lopez." "Did they say this?" said Padilla, impatiently. I took no notice of this question, but went on.

"I am of your opinion, Jacques," replied the other, who I suppose was called Lopez; "I will not eat my bread in idleness—Don Padilla—(he at the mention of his name turned pale, but remained silent)—Don Padilla shall certainly die!" "Here," said Jacques, "shall it be here on this spot? Many a man sets out on a journey he never returns from." (Padilla trembled, and looked round the room.) "No, not here," replied Lopez, "in the hole further on, where the trees hang over the water. You remember that place, Jacques?" Don Padilla started up and clasped his hand upon his sword, while his eyes flashed with fury—again he sat down, and I continued:

"At these words I lost my patience, and leaping down upon them, sword in hand, one of them was slain; and the other, taking advantage of my fall, stabbed me in the arm. Your daughters saved me from death in the morning; and I now return thanks to you for the protection of your castle."

Padilla muttered a very ungracious welcome. His mind was disturbed by the account I had given him, which involved in suspicion the designs of the ruffians; a suspicion that was, in some degree, confirmed by their then being in the kingdom, when he had supposed them, according to their own account, slaves in Turkey.

After a time spent in musing, he suddenly demanded if I had seen or could recollect the faces of these men? I replied in the negative; the darkness being so great that I had difficulty to distinguish their persons.

He did not appear displeased with this reply; though he swore vehemently he would have the scoundrel sought for, and hanged upon the nearest tree. "Had you killed them both, marquis," said he, "you would have made me eternally your friend."

"Thus it is," thought I; "the tools of our vengeance or ambition are a terror to ourselves. No doubt he trembles for the consequence of that ingratitude he himself has exemplified."

"I suppose," said he, after a gloomy silence of half an hour, "you do not intend remaining in this part of the country many days after you are so well recovered? I understood at Tolosa the troops were under marching orders."

I perfectly comprehended this hint, and I answered—"The death of my father has a more urgent claim upon my presence at Madrid; and possibly the new dignities I shall thereby receive, will prevent the necessity of my longer leading a life of so much hazard."

"Then you were a soldier of necessity?" replied he, without any regard to delicacy. "You say right; it is a hazardous profession."

I had some difficulty to qualify my reply. "It is as you say," answered I; "but the necessity I labored under was the call of honor and the claims of my country. These are powerful arguments, Don Padilla."

"Yes," cried Fernando, raising his head from the deep study he had fallen into; "but they are not arguments every man can feel."

He darted a look Padilla, who perfectly understood him, but made no reply; and to turn the discourse, which I feared would again kindle into wrath, I praised the situation of the castle, and the beauty of the scenery. He listened like a man who does not attend.

"You do not seem satisfied with its situation," said Fernando. "For my own part I think I have seen a castle on the banks of the Darro that was much more romantic, more suitable to reflection. You understand me?"

"I do," replied Padilla, rising; "but you do not understand me."

He was quitting the room abruptly, when suddenly

recollecting himself, he turned to apologize to me; observing that he had many orders to give, and some necessary arrangements to make after his absence.

As soon as we were alone, Fernando gave way to a transport of rage, insisting that we should, without sleeping again in the castle, return to Tolosa.

"Moderate, if you please, this frenzy of yours," said I. "Consider the variety of interests we have to arrange, in the service of which passion will be only detrimental. Don Padilla is a man of power. He possesses a large revenue from his acquired American fortune, which is increased by the acquisition of this extensive domain, and rendered immense by the addition of the estate in the provinces of Grenada. His income is equal to a prince; and think you it will be an easy matter to bring a criminal like him (supposing him such) to justice. We must bury in our breasts every suspicion, till time and opportunity shall bring forward the hour of retribution. Reflect also, that my heart is engaged to Virginia, and you will then remember that Padilla is her father."

"Well, well," replied he, "all this I have been turning in my mind; but remember also that I am under the most sacred engagements—that I cannot break. Remember also that this castle contains a secret, which, if told, may overwhelm all the power of Padilla in a moment."

"Do not bring before me that horrid recollection," said I. "The images of that chamber haunt my imagination; and this night I resolve to discover if all my suggestions are true, or whether the obscurity and terror of the moment had deceived my sight."

"I will attend you," returned Fernando; "this is a business in which we are both deeply engaged—no common affair must turn us to another purpose. Padilla will know that we have slept in different chambers, and it may raise his suspicion if we should vary that custom; mine is not far from yours, and I will be with you a few minutes before twelve."

I had scarcely time to agree to this proposal, when Gonzalez entered the room, under pretence of clearing away the fruit. "I was afraid, senors," said he, "how it would be—my heart misgave me when the ladies asked for the key. I could not account for it; but I have strange forebodings at times."

"Nothing new has happened, I hope," said I.

"Yes," replied he; "his excellenza has found out that you were all in the picture gallery, the curtain being left up. He has been in a terrible rage, and so scolded the young ladies, that they are crying their eyes out, poor souls! I have come in for my share; but I am old and tough, used to many a storm that blows over me."

"A savage!" exclaimed Fernando; "he is"—

"Hush! senor, pray, do not let anybody hear you. I am much mistaken if there be not some spy in the family. You remember the strange voice we heard that night? If I am betrayed, senors, I know what will be the consequence."

"Comfort yourself, Gonzalez," said I; "hear, and say nothing to anybody, and time may bring about strange events. We must soon leave the castle—probably tomorrow; be a guard over the ladies, and if any violence from whatever motive, should be offered them or you, instantly dispatch a courier to my palace at Madrid, and we will bring a troop of cavalry, and pull his old building down about his ears."

Gonzalez smiled at this expression, and, fearing to be missed, hastened away. I was very much pleased that a correspondence had thus been established. It was needless to clear up to him the knowledge we had of the person who had occasioned the interruption, as it would only subject him to a thousand fears, and, perhaps, cause him to leave the castle.

We saw little more of Don Padilla that night; he was, or pretended to be, absorbed in business; neither did the ladies appear, which made us suspect they were under a command to keep their chambers. I retired early to my own, where I prepared everything for our undertaking, putting my pistols in order, and providing my lamp. Some arrangements for my intended journey the ensuing day kept me employed; for I was determined no longer to delay my absence from Madrid, where my presence was so necessary.

The solemn hour of midnight arrived, and Fernando appeared very well armed, so that we had no reason to fear an encounter with Jacques, even should he be supported by Padilla. We trimmed our lamp, and to prevent accidents from the sudden closing of a door, or the current of the air, Fernando lighted a taper.

I gently drew back the canvas painting, which rolled into a niche, and entering the opening, closed it behind us. We proceeded silently and cautiously, till we arrived at the Gothic hall, where the unfinished feast remained.

I was about to draw the curtain behind the chair of state, when I fancied that I heard the hollow sound of a passing footstep. We paused for a few moments, and all again became silent.

I feared that our lights might betray us; for though we did not apprehend much personal danger, we knew not how to excuse to Don Padilla the unwarrantable freedom we were taking, and which, in our own eyes, appeared wanting of honor. The motive, however, was stranger, and out of the ordinary occurrence of life; common means of proceeding were abortive resources, and the necessity laid upon us became, in our eyes, sufficient excuse.

I drew the curtain with caution, and looking round, all appeared dark and vacant. We ventured forward, treading light as midnight robbers—the echoing hall catching and returning the smallest sound.

Our lights reflected our person in lengthened shadows on the wall, and that fear superstition inspires irresistibly touched our minds, as we recollected the several incidents that had occurred to ourselves.

We descended the staircase, down which I had fallen, and passed on till we came to the door of those chambers where I had been so shocked with human depravity. The key was no longer in the lock, a plain indica-

tion that some person had been there since myself, and an assurance that my senses had not wholly deceived me. We endeavored to enter by force; but the strong door resisted all the efforts we were capable of making, without endangering ourselves by the noise. We paused to consider whether we should return to find other means of entrance.

A faint ray of light darted across the farther end of the passage, discovering to us a distant and narrow flight of stairs, leading to a range of apartments, of which we had no knowledge.

"This flaring light will betray us," said I. "If you will remain here with the lamp and taper, I will venture to ascend those stairs, and see whence that light shines."

Fernando would not readily agree to this proposal; he wished us to leave our lights burning upon the pavement, while we should go together. But I represented the danger of our making too much noise; and the double service he would perform in coming to my assistance by surprise, if assistance should be necessary, as my assailants would not be prepared for his attack.

Having prevailed on him to agree to my proposal, I walked cautiously forward, ascending the back stairs. The light shone steadily on the landing, then suddenly disappeared, as if the door of the chamber, from whence it shone, had been closed. I ventured forward, listening at every step I took. About twenty paces forward my ear caught the low sounds of voices, but so indistinct, that I could make out no one sentence.

I paused, and in a few moments, a door on the right hand was partly opened, a stream of light shone full in the gallery, and some person looked out, as if to see no intruder was near. He retired without closing the door, and I advanced, scarce daring to breathe. I ventured so near that I could distinguish the voice of Padilla, and the harsh tones of some other, who spoke so low, I had difficulty to understand him.

"All that you tell me is true?" said Padilla.

"True, your excellenza."

"And then you heard that old dotard amusing them with all the lies that are circulated by the superstitious fools about him?"

"Yes, your excellenza. He mentioned the strange entrance of Count Fernandez, on your wedding night; upon which they made their comments. I am certain the marquis overheard more than was sufficient when he was roosting in the tree."

"And for which your tongues deserve to be cut out," said Padilla. "We must consult about him—he must pay for his curiosity!" "Aye, aye, by the holy Peter!" said the ruffian, whom I had no doubt was Jacques; "if I take him in hand he will have tight work of it—'tis what I owe him for the murder of my friend. He was very curious in his inquiries about the ladies."

"Do you say so?" cried Padilla. "Do you think he has any suspicion?"

"'Tis as certain as death," replied Jacques; "he has more than suspicion—I should have done his business that night, had I found him snug."

I shuddered at the narrow escape I had had; and not without a sense of the danger I ran from having raised upon me so inveterate an enemy. He went on:

"Invite them to remain with you some days. They will not enter into your motive. There are many ways to dispose of a guest!"

"By my troth, are there!" said Padilla, in a raised voice; "you have it hit, Jacques—these sparks are not to be played with. Fernando is a fiery-headed fellow, and has a claim from his ancestors, never yet settled, to these very estates."

"I know it," replied Jacques; "I have thought on that. We will settle his claim, however, with more certainty than laws."

Don Padilla broke into a laugh. It was the laugh of malignant triumph; and, had I at that moment possessed the power, it is probable I should have made no scruples of arresting their intentions.

"Let us now go," said Padilla. "Have you the key? We must perform the necessary duty."

I inquired within myself what this duty could be. Had it relation to the things I had seen in the moonlight chamber; or were there yet deeper or more horrible secrets in the gloomy walls of this antique building? "Why not be witness to this duty?" thought I. "If it relates to that chamber, they might pass these stairs—I shall have time to reach Fernando, and we will take our stations together."

I retreated gently down the stairs, and passing quickly along the passage, was surprised to find Fernando absent. The lamp remained burning on the pavement, but the taper was gone. "Surely," said I to myself, "this is very imprudent—what succor could he have given me in case of necessity? But what motive could have led him from his post? it must have been momentous. He did not pass me I am certain; and surely cannot be returned to my chamber."

I waited with the greatest impatience and apprehension, expecting that Padilla, and Jacques would every moment appear upon the opposite stairs, and find me exposed before them, in a place where their crime would run no danger of detection. I durst not venture to call, and my imagination began to picture some unexpected tragedy.

The old bell of the castle sounded the solemn hour of one. Its vibration seemed lengthened in my ear, where it had not ceased trembling, when a bright light darted from a door on the left hand at a distance, and gave me to expect the return of Fernando.

I advanced a few paces to meet him, wondering what could have induced him to enter that passage in my absence; but my wonder was changed into astonishment, on beholding a phenomenon singular and unaccountable. The light, whose rays had broke upon the long and obscure passage, moved forward without a visible conductor, in the form of an ignis-fatus, or marshy meteor; it moved within a foot of the pave-



ment, with a slow and even motion, and its light was fixed and clear, without wavering on the breath of the wind.

I stood at a distance, watching this ominous appearance, and expecting what might ensue—nor did I many moments expect in vain.

A tall figure, wrapped in a long cloak, and muffled round the head, walked solemnly into the passage. The arms were crossed upon the breast, and but a faint outline beneath the drapery, marked its connection with the human form.

I shuddered as this phantom drew near; as it perfectly brought to my mind the black figure I had beheld in my dream, within a few yards of the very spot where I then stood. Its size was equal to that of Padilla, and I should have supposed it himself in disguise, had it not been for the supernatural flame which moved forward before. I wanted courage to speak or to move waiting with terror for the event.

He moved forward, in a musing posture, until he came within a few yards of where I stood, then solemnly raising the hood of the cloak which enveloped his head, and throwing wide his right arm, I beheld beneath, the dress of a soldier stained with blood.

I started at the sight. I doubt not but I saw before me the perturbed spirit of Count Ferendez, and my knees trembled beneath me. His countenance was pale and bloodless—his eyes were wild, yet without luster,—and death seemed stamped upon his yellow forehead. His lips were without motion; and, as he slowly passed me he pointed to the door from which I had seen him enter. Once, and but once, I had seen this dreadful vision of disturbed immortality, on the eventful night which had announced the death of my father. The indistinct view that I then had, imprinted forever on my memory the terror of features not to be forgotten; and it was not until the phantom had ascended the great stairs, that I found courage to remove from the place where I stood.

I could not doubt but the motion it had made to the farther door, concerned my friend; whom I now judged to have seen the same appearance in my absence, and followed it into some danger. I had reason to believe, from what I had seen in the moonlight chamber, that Don Padilla and Jacques were not the only inhabitants of this dreary wing; and I shuddered with apprehension, as I hastened to find my friend.

The door which I entered, opened into a winding passage, which was arched, with masonry, very different from any part of the castle I had hitherto seen. I began to fear, from its solidity, that it led into the dungeons and vaults which ran beneath the whole building.

My apprehensions were in part allayed, when I entered, by three descending steps, and a narrow door, which, from the rust of its fastenings, seemed to have been closed for many years, into a chapel, evidently long in disuse.

I waved my lamp in the air, to guide me through the deep gloom which seemed impenetrable; a cold and sacred stillness seemed to reside in the place, and to fasten on my mind with a reverential awe.

Tall shadows seemed to move along the walls, as my lamp waved in the air. I called, in a low voice, the name of Fernando; but no sound, except faint echoes, returned reply.

I began to be extremely alarmed on his account; not being able to conjecture what misfortune could have befallen him.

I paused, and looked round me with a reverence I cannot describe, and which we seldom feel. The ornaments of a carved work were covered with dust and cobwebs. The crucifix and the lamps were broken. Trophies of ancient military exploits, waved their torn fragments in the air. I approached the altar, on which a small crucifix yet remained, mildewed with damp. I lowered my lamp to look at the workmanship of the altar, and perceived on one side an iron door, which opened into the wall, standing open, and I had no doubt led into the family sepulchre.

"Doubtless," thought I, "my dear Fernando has followed that terrible phantom into this place, and his fright has overcome him, surrounded by so many fearful objects."

I confess I did not feel any satisfaction in the thought of descending into this dark and frightful abyss, but the claims of friendship suppressed the repugnance; and holding my lamp so as it was least liable to be extinguished, I ventured down the steps, which were loose and shook beneath my weight. The lamp which I held in my hand, scarce served to render darkness visible; and I saw, with fear, that the flame became every moment dimmer, till it twinkled like a star and expired, leaving me in the profoundest darkness.

I called aloud on Fernando, but received no answer; the hollow vaults extending and reverberating my voice to a distance, which left me to conjecture.

I stretched out my hands, and found them resisted on one side by a pile of coffins, which shook at the touch. I shuddered as if I had grasped a serpent, and turned round with intention to hasten from a place where the air was so damp; I had scarce power to breathe, and where heaps of dead were extended in terrible array.

In my haste I stumbled against something on the floor, and fell down. I reached out my hand after the first surprise, and felt a human body on the ground before me. The blood ran cold to my heart. My fingers traced over the face: it seemed warm beneath the touch, and truth flashed upon my comprehension.

"It is Fernando," cried I aloud, and scarce knowing what I said; "he is dying, and no help is near." The pang which I felt at that moment, I cannot attempt to describe—it was a start of despair; and, forgetting danger to myself, I dragged the body up the steps, which were clammy with subterranean dews, and happily gained the chapel.

I tore open his clothes, and putting my hand upon

his heart, a slight pulsation was perceptible. I raised the body on my shoulders, and being too much agitated to regard trifling incidents, I ran through the apartments, notwithstanding the impenetrable darkness. The air in the great hall was strong, and, placing him upon one of the chairs, I chafed his temples and breast till he began to breathe freely, and, by slow degrees, recovered. His recollection, however, was extremely confused; and he cried frequently, "Oh! the horrid vision!—Take me away, my dear Albert! Save I save me!"

I was myself almost distracted at this raving; not doubting but his senses were disturbed by what he had seen, and I conducted him with the utmost difficulty back to my chamber, where I forced him to drink one of the cordials the physician had prescribed to me; and then laying him upon the bed, I sat by him, thinking over the many unaccountable incidents which had occurred to us both within so very few months.

It appeared to me like a dream. "Who else amongst mankind," thought I, "are involved in so singular an adventure?—in a business so complicated, so mysterious, and so dreadful, that I am, at times, tempted to doubt my own existence, or to believe all the dreams of idleness and romantic superstition."

"Undoubtedly murder is the most atrocious offense man can commit against man; for which neither he nor all united society can make retribution to the injured. It is treason against the order and harmony of nature. Without the intervention of supernatural witness, no crime has been discovered by way so unforeseen and so singular."

"It was the belief of the ancients, that the wandering spirits of persons slain by violence, whether private or in battle, roamed about the earth until their ashes received burial; and that belief has descended, and remains to this day amongst the lower classes of mankind. And why may it not be so? Are we more wise than the ancients? or are we more daring?"

#### CHAPTER VIII.

Credulity, the child of Ignorance,  
Nurtured by Idleness, best loves to dwell  
In rustic shades, or in the gloomy pile.

WHILE I sat beside my friend, wrapped in these gloomy musings, the morning dawned across the mountains, light and airy clouds spread over the horizon; here streaked with gold and there dappled with silver. In the east the ethereal blue of the heavens enlivened the landscape, and the dark mountains of Morona seemed, for once, to smile.

I arose from watching over my friend, who had fallen into a gentle slumber, and opening the casement, inhaled the fresh air of the morning, which revived my spirits, and seemed to breathe upon me in a new life.

The beauty of the garden beneath me, gay with a profusion of variegated flowers, invited me to partake of its sweets, before the blazing sun should have exhausted them, or withered the clear green of the foliage.

No person was yet visible in this large pile of building, and fastening the sliding picture with a knife, I stole softly along the galleries, and descended toward the garden. The door of a little room on the ground floor stood open; and some person within sighed heavily.

"Who," thought I, "can have occasion to indulge this early grief? Have those in humble stations troubles like us to prey upon them, and blight their little felicities? Very possible this is some love-stricken maiden indulging the reveries of future prospects, and sighing forth the name of some fortunate youth."

These passing reflections occasioned my return after going by a few paces, and curiosity prompted me to enter. I was greatly surprised to see Virginia already up and sitting alone, so lost in the subject of her reflections, that I made several steps before she turned her eyes to see me.

She started, blushing at my intrusion, and, in her confusion, was at a loss to speak.

"My dear cousin," said I, faltering, for I had caught her diffidence, "how fortunate is this; it is a chance beyond my hopes. This day, Virginia, will most probably part us many leagues, and when shall I see you again?"

"That I do not know," replied she, turning her eyes towards the ground. "But why should you ever wish to see me more?"

"Can you ask me so cold, so cruel a question?" said I, taking her hand. "Can you be ignorant, that while you administered to my illness, you inspired a pain that is incurable, but by yourself. Tell me, then, dearest Virginia, whether I may hope you can return my affection?"

She blushed, hesitated, half raised her eyes beaming with meaning, then answered with the prettiest confusion in the world, "I know not, marquise, whether discretion justifies me. I am ignorant of the ways of the world, and have only to speak with the sincerity of a country maid. I have heard that, in polished circles, they never mean what they say."

"But I, Virginia, have been little used to those circles; the camp has been my school, and the thunder of war my rattle. We have no time, in camps, to study the art of trifling with the affections of the fair; and believe me, lady, you yourself cannot speak with less disguise. Speak, then, Virginia; let me listen with delight to the accents of peace."

I endeavored to soothe her embarrassment. I pressed her to declare that she was not indifferent; and an affirmative, which died away upon her trembling lips, elevated my feelings to rapture.

After allowing a few short minutes to these endearing confessions, which constitute so much of the pleasure of genuine love, and evaporate in detail, I remembered with regret the necessity there was for my sudden departure from the castle, and adverting

to the return of Don Padilla, "Is it not surprising," said I, "that he should treat with such *hauteur* persons who have some claims to civility? Can you guess any motive, Virginia, for this strange disposition? Is it a malady of the mind, or arises it from external causes?"

"I," replied she, "cannot give any reason for it. There was a time, I am told, when he was all vivacity—too much so, indeed; but that was before he went to Peru. His good fortune made him more exalted in his carriage; but from the death of my mother (which happened before I can remember) arose that severity of manners, which glooms over his own enjoyments. He is always, I think, worse after his visits to Grenada; and my sister and I have generally to seclude ourselves from his presence for some days, till his temper becomes more settled."

"And does no suspicion ever cross your mind?"

"Holy Virgin! what suspicion should?"

"Nay, I know not; but surely there must be some secret, some unusual cause for this behavior. Who, or what does he visit at Grenada? Have you relations there?"

"You ask very strange questions," said Virginia. "Because," replied I, "I have strange suspicions. Your mother died suddenly—do not start, Virginia, but hear me. Her waiting-maid, Teresa, has never been heard of since the night of the funeral."

Here I suddenly remembered the images of that horrible chamber, and of what my eyes had witnessed, and I started up involuntarily. A moment was sufficient for recollection; I sat down and continued:

"The Lady Zidana, what became of her? How, or when did she die?"

"Did you never hear?" said Virginia, turning very pale, perhaps at the disorder of my features. "I remember old Gonzalez told us one day she was drowned in a boat upon the river Darro, by the boatman being in liquor. But what has all this to do with your sudden departure?"

"Would to Heaven," cried I, "that it had not to do! Ah! Virginia, I fear!"

"Fear what?" said she, trembling. "You terrify me with apprehension—what is it you fear?"

"I fear that all is not right. Why is the eastern wing of the castle never visited?"

"O," said she, smiling, "if that is the reason of your suspicions, I can easily do them away. That side of the castle is haunted. Have you not noticed that large painting of the black and the white knights? Did you understand it?"

"Yes," replied I, "I did understand it; it has a very important meaning. Are you then acquainted with the secret?"

"I know no particular secret in it," returned she. "It is well known that wing of the castle is haunted by these knights. They were two brothers, who, in former times, fell in love with the lady of the castle, who was their only sister. She lived alone with them after the death of their parents; her name was Seraphino, and she was renowned as the greatest beauty in the provinces. Every knight who sought her hand, was obliged to tilt with one or the other of the brothers who constantly remained victorious; and their un courteous behavior drove all visitors from the castle."

"The brothers having no strange knights to dispute with, became jealous of each other, both endeavoring to influence Seraphino with their criminal passion; and, being of fiery spirits, they agreed to bring their pretensions to issue by a single combat. They mounted their horses in the courtyard, obliging their sister to witness this unnatural dispute. The white knight was wounded, but he unhorsed the black one. Both were enraged to a pitch of frenzy; and dragging their sister into the great Gothic hall in the eastern wing, they there proceeded to finish the combat by the sword. Seraphino endeavored to part them, but in vain. They fought with the fury of lions; and were not content, till they had received so many wounds, that they fell upon the floor in the agonies of death."

"Seraphino was overwhelmed with grief and despair at the sight; and, stabbing herself with a poniard, fell and died upon the bodies of her brothers."

"Ever since that time the east wing has been haunted. The noise of the knights fighting is heard at particular times; and upon the same night on which the event first took place, the spirits of the knights and the lady act over the tragedy; the marks of which are visible at this day; the form of their bodies where they fell, being printed on the floor in blood."

"This is the most tragical of tragedies, Virginia," said I. "Who gave you all this wonderful information? Have you seen or heard any part of it yourself?"

"I have certainly heard very strange noises," she replied. "I have heard groans, at times, which sunk my heart within me. But why should you doubt the truth of this story?"

"Because, my dear cousin," said I, "there are many circumstances very improbable in it. It is not more than twenty years since that side of the building was deserted. Your mother, Emira, resided there; and if it had been subject to these martial visitants, I fancy she would soon have changed her situation."

Virginia had attended to these objections with impatience. "Nothing is more easily answered," said she, with an air of superior argument. "My father, when he came to live at this place, on his return from Peru, found the castle shut up; and, treating the whole story as a jest, he had that very suit of rooms fitted up for his own residence, the better to inspire the servants with courage. He was, however, never very content in his situation; and the servants have told me, they were certain, from his change of disposition, he had seen the unnatural brothers in their nocturnal rendezvous."

"He still persisted in living there, when my mother died. Who knows if she were not frightened to death? I am sure the sight of three dead people cutting each other in pieces, would kill me. When I first saw you



wounded in the wood, and the dead robber beside you, I thought of the two knights."

"Nothing could be more natural," replied I. "But, 'tis very strange none of the servants should ever meet these cavaliers; and how should your father suddenly abandon that side of the castle? If he could live in harmony with them three or four years, how came they to fall out at length?"

"You laugh, marquis, but I assure you it is a very serious affair. On the wedding night of my father with Lady Zidana, he had this hall cleared and illuminated in the most splendid manner. All the guests were seated, and the revelry begun, when the knight in black, wrapped in a long cloak, the color of his armor, entered the hall. The clock struck one—and all the frightened guests started up in terror, flying away in the greatest confusion. When all the visitors had made their escape different ways, and none but Lady Zidana, fainting on the floor, and Don Padilla remained, he took courage to inquire the reason of this unexpected visit; inviting the ghost, at the same time, to sit down to the feast."

"The black knight frowned at this familiar invitation; and, opening his long cloak, showing his armor broken, and his body covered with wounds. 'Fly,' cried he, in a voice like the crashing of spears; 'this hall is mine! My brother will be here anon, to partake with our sister in the feast. This east wing of the castle is ours; and whoever henceforth resides in it must enter the combat with us.' So saying, he threw his gauntlet on the ground; and looking sternly at my father, pointed with one hand to the challenge, and the other to the door. My father willingly left such a guest in possession of the feast, which, I am told, remains on the table to this very day; and taking his new married bride in his arms, hurried away from the Gothic hall."

I could not but admire this mixture of truth and falsehood; and the plausible turn Padilla had given to an interruption, witnessed by so numerous an assembly, that to have denied the fact would be to have pronounced himself guilty.

Credulity is ever ready to believe without criticism; and no tale can be too improbable for ignorant auditors. I had been warned by Gonzalez of the ridiculous reports circulated by the servants, which he never took the trouble to contradict; and I was grieved to see that Virginia had paid them so much attention. Nothing, indeed, could be more natural in their secluded situation, where a tale of the marvelous had charms unknown in the busy scenes of life, and where superstition held its sway without control.

"Virginia," said I, at the conclusion of her story, "I have some reasons to wish you not to place too much confidence in the strange reports of domestics. They are generally unacquainted with facts, and from vague information, or half-heard sentences, conjure up a story that will set reason at defiance. Let us now, if you please, leave the knights to their tilting in the hall for matters of infinitely more importance. Will it be possible that I should correspond with you?—send you my plans, my adventures and actions? Do you know of no way by which we may exchange our ideas and sentiments?"

"No," replied she; "you would not wish me to enter any clandestine correspondence. My honor would suffer in my own eyes; and you would esteem me less."

"Not so my angel," cried I; "there are cases and situations in which it is allowable to set aside those strong claims of parental duty. When, for instance, a father would control the establishment of his daughter merely from whim, pleasure, or convenience—when he has not one rational argument to oppose—when he does not condescend to inquire into the merits and claims of the candidate—nothing can be more unjust and unreasonable."

"I have listened to you with regret," answered she, "because I would not willingly alter my opinion of you. But what shall I think if you thus early wish to lead me into opposition? Indeed I cannot—will not! It is time enough for me to do thus when he shall have proceeded to these acts of tyranny you enumerate."

"Must I then depart, my Virginia?" said I; "must I quit you without a certain prospect of hope? Will you sacrifice all my happiness to the will of your father?"

"How you talk, marquis," said she, with an air of vexation; "have I said any of this? or is the situation we, at this time, stand in such as you are picturing? My father, I acknowledge, is melancholy to extreme; but time and your merit"—

Here she paused, suddenly recollecting that she was, perhaps, saying more than our situation permitted; and, blushing, she remained silent.

I could not but admire the sensibility of her soul, and the rectitude of her mind, unpolished by the sophisms of the world; and though I should have rejoiced at some means of corresponding, she yet rose in my esteem by the refusal.

I endeavored to convince her of the ardor of my passion by saying all that my situation could suggest. I refrained wounding her with the terrible subject of our suspicions. On that point I found my heart torn by the most conflicting passions. I knew that Fernando was resolved upon justice; but it now became impossible I should follow his designs. The world, on cool judgment, would think me a monster, and calumny would not fail to suggest that to obtain the daughter I had hunted down the father as an obstacle to my desires. I lost myself in a reverie of maddening reflections, till an observation of Virginia's recalled my recollection, and ashamed of having betrayed so much absence of mind, I took a tender farewell, exchanging a mutual promise of fidelity and love.

I returned to my chamber in a pensive mood, which

I indulged till Fernando awoke. His fancy was tranquilized, and his senses clear.

He inquired if I had given orders for our departure; as he was positively resolved not to remain another night in the castle.

While he adjusted his dress, I went down to give my servants orders to hasten to Tolosa, there to procure mules for my journey over the mountains; Fernando being to accompany me the first day's stage, his engagements with the army not allowing a longer absence.

Padilla did not arise till late. He then requested our attendance in the breakfast-room, where he put on as much condescension as his temper would allow. He made some slight excuse for his first reception; and, as a compensation, requested us to remain with him a week or two longer; professing his desire of some companions to enliven the solitude of his situation.

"We go hence in the afternoon," said Fernando, abruptly.

Don Padilla's countenance indicated his disappointment; and he strove in vain to unbend the frown which accompanied it. I must confess, when I recollected the black design of his invitation, I was nearly forgetting that Virginia was his daughter.

"It would be to little purpose," said I, with a look which I intended should speak to his soul, "for us to remain longer in the castle, we cannot sleep at night."

"Whose is that fault?" said he—"that innocence can't sleep?"

"And can you sleep?" replied I.

He was evidently rising into anger, yet fearing to betray himself; and condemning my own folly, I endeavored to turn off a discussion equally imprudent and dangerous. I pretended to have received dispatches, by way of Tolosa, which declared my presence in Madrid could no longer be dispensed with; and that knowing our company would be willingly spared, I had, not an hour before, sent my servant for mules.

"Do you go immediately to Madrid?" said Padilla; "or do you return to Tolosa?" I replied that I should proceed immediately over the mountains, and that my friend would attend me on one day's journey.

He made some slight observation on the danger of these mountains, from the banditti which infested them. "But I suppose," said he, "you are well armed, and your servants are not without courage?"

"As to that," answered I, "I have very little fear. These banditti are only the deserters of rebels; they are cruel, but they are cowards; and though I have only one servant, armed with a saber and arquebuse, with a sword and pistols for myself, I am not apprehensive of danger. Raolo has stood me in many a desperate encounter; and will not turn his back to any man in the passes and defiles of Sierra Morena."

"May be so," said Don Padilla, dryly. "I am glad you have so trusty a companion. There have been people murdered in these recesses before this time, marquis; I only speak to caution you."

"Aye, aye," said Fernando, "people have been murdered in other places besides the mountains of Sierra Morena—have they not, marquis?"

Don Padilla evidently started and looked around; but to cover either his anger or sudden agitation, he replied, with a laugh, "Your friend, marquis, has a mind to be witty upon you for your exploit in the wood."

"Do you call that murder, señor?" cried Fernando. "I should have thought you could have told the difference."

"And why I?" cried Padilla, trembling with rising fury. "Can nobody but me tell the difference?"

"Yes," replied Fernando, "everybody but you."

"Come, come," said I coolly, "this is the most idle discourse imaginable; and shows the absurd turn conversation will sometimes take. I hope, Don Padilla, we shall be permitted to bid adieu to the ladies."

"I doubt it," returned he, with his wonted haughtiness. "The ladies are employed."

"But surely, they can forego that employ for a few moments, to take leave of their cousins. Especially when we may never meet again."

"That observation is just," said Padilla; "you may never meet again."

"As such may, indeed, be the case," said I, gravely. "You will not surely deny me the satisfaction of returning my thanks to my cousins for the kindness I have received in particular."

"I will deliver them myself," replied he. "There is no occasion for these formalities, they only make parting more unpleasant. I detest leave-taking."

"Except when it quits you of troublesome guests," said Fernando; "and then, señor, it is the pleasantest action in life."

"I confess, then," replied Padilla, peevishly, "I shall this day experience a very great pleasure."

"You are fairly beaten, my friend," said I; "you must not pretend to catch his excellency. But now let us be serious. If you ever come to Madrid, Don Padilla, you will find at my palace a cordial reception; and I hope it will not be long before I have the pleasure of receiving you there, that I may return in part the obligation."

"Nothing is certain," answered he, gloomily. "Life hangs upon uneven threads, marquis. You are a young man; but many a man dies about your age—especially if he is in the army."

I observed, that while he made this superfluous remark, his eyes moved from one to the other, with a malignity and sneer upon his countenance that rekindled all my suspicions, and flushed my face with resentment. I could not forbear, in my own mind, marking him for a villain; and I rejoiced that he was fortunately and timely frustrated in his plans by the discovery we had made.

After this long and unpleasant conversation we separated. I endeavored, without success, to procure admission to the ladies; and it was with difficulty that I found an opportunity of speaking six words to

Gonzalez, to assure him of my protection, and to exact his promise, that he would watch over my interest, and in case of any particular incident arising that might effect the happiness of either of the ladies, that he would dispatch a courier to me at my expense.

I passed the time till noon in unpleasant reflections; Fernando relating to me the supernatural incidents of the preceding night. He having followed, as I suspected, the phantom, on its beckoning him as it passed.

"It was very unwillingly that I entered the chapel," said he; "and nothing but a sense of my own promise to obey, could have induced me to descend into that horrible tomb. The specter moved amidst the piles of coffins, and seemed to intend leading me into a labyrinth of vaults, which branched under the castle. When turning my eye a little towards the left, I perceived a light rise out of the earth, and a female, dressed in a strange habit, gradually rose as from an opening grave."

"A female," cried I, interrupting him; "that is most strange! Who, or what can she be? For what purpose is she there? Does she dwell in those dungeons?"

"I know not," replied Fernando; "such she appeared to my eyes; and her disordered countenance and dress reminded me of the furies. She gave a loud scream at my appearance—a scream which rang through those dreary vaults, and dismayed my inmost soul. She sunk again into the grave, and left me in total darkness—the spirit of Count Ferendez having continued its way in silence."

"I had lost my taper, in the emotion of my mind, and was so much overcome with the damp air, and the shock my spirits had received, that I sunk upon the ground."

Our comments upon this relation were extremely unpleasant. In the midst of them we were interrupted by the return of my servant with the mules and three guides, who were to accompany us.

Don Padilla attended upon us himself, probably to prevent the possibility of our speaking to his daughters. He remarked the number of my guides, and seemed curious to know how we were all equipped.

I looked up in vain to the windows of the building for a last glance from my Virginia, but she was not visible; and, after receiving the sarcastic wishes of Don Padilla for our prosperity and safety, we set out from the Castle of Montillo, where so many eventful incidents had happened, that our lives, actions and pursuits might be dated from the events that carried us thither.

#### CHAPTER IX.

The winds are up, the lofty elmen swings.  
Again the lightning and the thunder pours,  
And the full clouds are braste attenes in stonem  
showers.—Chatterton.

Our way lay through the wood whose deep boughs soon hid us from the sight of the castle. Our curiosity induced us to dismount, and giving the guides charge to wait for us at the bend of the road, we took the path along the bank of the river. We examined every gloomy hollow in a cursory manner; being more particular when we arrived at the spot where the spirit of Count Ferendez had first conducted me.

It was a place of peculiar secrecy; being concealed and overhung with interwoven cork trees, which bent their branches to the river, that ran beneath the hanging brow, deep and without apparent current.

Our time did not admit much curiosity, and we proceeded onwards to the place where Lopez had been buried. Fernando, who had attended on that occasion, perceived at once that the incident, which had alarmed me, and which I then judged rightly, had been Jacques carrying away the body of his friend, to destroy the proofs it might at any time have furnished.

We found our mules in waiting at an opening of the forest, and we entered upon a country which every league became more barren. We advanced up the mountains, leaving behind us the silver stream of the Guadalquivir, which the eye might trace to an infinite distance; now wandering amongst sun-browned fields, where not a blade of grass appeared; then gliding amongst pleasant valleys, where verdure spread in all the freshness of beauty, and smiling villages intermingled with plantations of olives.

The majestic Castle of Montillo was no longer visible, but as a black spot in the forest, and we soon lost sight of it wholly.

Our guides and my servant Raolo hung behind, that we might converse with freedom; and we settled on a plan of future correspondence.

The country became so wild and dreary, that I would have persuaded Fernando, to return, he having no one to attend him but his own servant, a guard by no means sufficient to the dangers of the road.

At nightfall we reached a few scattered huts, where it was difficult to find entertainment. The inhabitants consisted chiefly of gipsies and shepherds, who attended the flocks on the mountains, and lead a life of rude and pastoral employ.

What little they possessed they were willing to share; and our mules and ourselves were accommodated in one long room, not over remarkable for sweetness. 'Tis well for us soldiers that we are not very difficult to please or in traveling we should often be unpleasantly situated, in places where money will scarcely procure the necessities of life.

We arose very early in the morning, that we might have leisure to rest at noon, the heats of the preceding day having so much incommoded me, that I found some pain in my wounded arm.

I took leave of Fernando with many melancholy reflections, which so dejected my spirits, that I was ashamed of my own feelings. I fancied that we should never meet again; and, pulling my hat over my eyes, I gave



m, mules the reins, riding slowly forward, absorbed in thought.

The beauty of the morning had few charms for my prejudiced eye, which was perpetually bringing before me the garden of the castle, with Virginia and Almira, and when I looked for some particular object, I felt disappointed at beholding nothing round me but rising cliffs and barren mountains, spreading and extending to the clouds in chaotic confusion; with here and there a stumpy tree, or gloomy cork, to mark the scenery.

How different this from the fertile regions of Grenada, where a new paradise seemed breathing into life. There every plant, every fruit, and every flower that could charm the senses, please the taste, or gratify the eye, bloomed with the profusion of prolific nature. Cooling streams wandered amidst flowery meadows; the husbandman's song mingled with the chanting of birds; and animated creation enjoyed its being.

But how sad was the reverse of the prospect before me! Mountains piled upon mountains; roads, the terror of the traveler from the accumulated dangers of impending cliffs and yawning gulfs, with all the terrors of a cruel banditti. The face of nature arid and sterile; no fruits, no flowers, no plants appeared, except a few stumpy thorns, sickly olives, and mountain thyme. No cooling streams, margined with violets, gladdened the senses; but a silent and dreary prospect filled the soul with images of the horrible and the sublime.

At noon we sat down beneath the shelter of some broken rocks, which were scattered in a confused heap, characteristic of the wilderness around us. It was a situation picturesque in the extreme, and wanted only a company of banditti dividing their spoil, or waiting to fall upon the traveler, in place of muleteers' eating garlic and cheese, to become worthy the council of a master.

After our repast, we emptied two bottles of Malaga wine; which elevated the spirits of my companions so much, that I wished in my own mind, for that content and joy written upon the broad grin of their countenances. Every thing to them was a subject of jest—the black mountains, the sterile summits of the spire-like cliffs, received ridiculous names, as fancy or wit drew a comparison.

The clear air seemed to expand the spirits. One of them sang a little ballad I had before seen in Murcia, while my servant and the others danced, and, joining in a chorus, made the hanging rocks resound.

Ye maidens fair of feature,  
Than dews of morning sweeter,  
Attend my song,  
Nor think it long,  
That pinioned time flies fleetly  
While on your cheeks reposes  
The bloom of fragrant roses,  
Your dimpling smiles,  
All hearts beguiles,  
And tender love discloses.  
Then sing with me, ye happy maids,  
Cooling fountains, pleasing shades;  
Where love and youth, forever gay,  
Sport the fleeting hours away.

Come here, ye maidens witty,  
Forsake the town and city;  
A rustic life,  
Devoid of strife,  
Becomes the young and pretty;  
Here all is mirth and pleasure,  
Health is the peasant's treasure,  
The nymphs invite,  
And sweet delight,  
The happy moments measure.  
Then sing with me, ye happy maids,  
Cooling fountains, pleasing shades;  
Where love and youth forever gay,  
Sport the fleeting hours away.

Notwithstanding my present disposition to sadness, I could not but be entertained with the gaiety of the little group: who brought back to their fancy the pleasures of their native fields, and forgot the fatigues of their journey in the remembrance of past felicity.

What a contrast did their vivacity form against the joyless scenes around us. It would have exhibited that trait of the human character, which can feel pleasure in the midst of danger; and happiness in regions of unproductive barrenness.

Having wearied themselves with singing and dancing, they laid down on the hard rocks to enjoy the refreshment of sleep; while my fancy dwelt upon Virginia, and complicated plans of futurity.

"Undoubtedly," thought I, "the lower ranks of life are not half so much exposed to vexations as those of greater refinement. What lofty cares interrupt the slumbers of these muleteers, on the tops of the mountains of Morena? while, to whom they look up with envy, feel myself infinitely more unhappy. Whence arises this distinction? Are our joys and sorrows nearly poised? or does a cultivated mind bring forth imaginary evils?"

In reflections like these, I passed the time till the hour arrived for our journeying onwards. The guides and Raolo were quickly ready, and we bade adieu, with some regret, to our rude shelter, the sun yet blazing with splendor.

We wound among the rugged roads of the mountains, now climbing by a narrow path, now proceeding down a dangerous steep; then edging the brink of a precipice, where the smallest slip would have been fatal; or traversing, with caution, the narrow and gloomy dell, where every hollow might conceal a band of ruffians, and fancy might almost see them start upon the trembling traveler.

Towards evening the wind freshened, blowing cold over the tops of the mountains, whose bare side afforded no foliage to shelter off the blast. Heavy clouds rose over the horizon, adding to the darkness and

dreariness of coming night. I inquired, how far we had to go before we arrived at the next inn?

"No less than four leagues," replied one of the muleteers; "and these clouds drive on so heavy, that I'm afraid, señor, we shall not reach there by night-fall."

"And do you know no nearer shelter, no goat-herds' hovels, where we could find a night's lodging?" said I.

"No, your excellenza," replied he. "This part of the mountain is so barren, that a kidling of a year's growth could not browse upon it. We have nothing to do but put forward, and trust to St. Michel."

"That is an excellent sentiment," said I. "If we always hope for the best, and defy the worst, we shall overcome many a difficulty."

"You are perfectly right, señor," replied Raolo. "The man who feels every danger which may happen, is never ready when they do. A soldier, your excellenza, should brave every weather and every difficulty. He should be above fortune, if he would not have fortune use him ill."

"I approve your courage, Raolo: but suppose now we should be attacked by some troops of robbers?"

"O, for the love of Christ!" cried one of the muleteers; "don't suppose any such things, your excellenza; what would become of us? I never had any relish for fighting in my life; and just now, I think, less than ever."

"There are very strange stories, it must be owned," said another; "I have sometimes listened till my hair bristled up on end. There, señor, there is a cross stuck upon the edge of that rock. Some traveler has been murdered there."

Each of the muleteers crossed themselves repeating their *Ave Maria*.

"Do you know the story?" inquired I, willingly to amuse the time with conversation: for I felt the gloom that was creeping round us effect my spirits, which had never regained their tone, since my adventures in the forest.

"It has been there," said Pedro, "ever since I first remember. In former times, it used to be almost impossible to travel over the mountains; and in some places the crosses stand so thick, you would think they were planted to grow there."

"You are very familiar with sacred things," said his companion. "For my part my blood runs cold when I see them; especially since I heard the story which old Jacintha told me one night at Tolosa."

"What story was that?" said Jerome. "I never heard it, and I have heard many strange things."

"If his excellenza will give me leave," said the muleteer, "I will tell you now—it is not very long, and you will find it very entertaining."

"How can that be, honest friend?" said I.

"I may very well be true," replied he, bowing; "but it begins to rain, and we shall be soon drenched to the skin."

I inquired if they knew of no shelter such as we found at noon.

"No," replied Pedro. "I would not for the universe descend into those glens; they look, by this light, like so many unfathomable pits—I should think I was going down into the bottomless gulf."

"You make a strange comparison," said I.

"If you all prefer a wet skin to braving the dangers of these unknown cavities, put on; and let us have the story Martin was going to entertain us with."

The evening was so dark, that we began to lose the distinct view of immediate objects; and surely no prospect could be so totally cheerless.

The rain spread a mist about us, and rendered the roads dangerous; while we feared to move from a direct line, in search of shelter, lest we should plunge down some precipice, or wholly lose the road. The muleteers could not dissemble their fears, and I had to urge Martin several times for his story, well knowing that talking banishes fear. After several loud hems, Martin began—his companions riding close, that they might attend his tale.

"A traveler, who was mounted on a sorry ass, had to journey over the mountains alone, without a guide, for he was very poor. He rode several days, till he came near the middle of the mountain. It was about night-fall that he arrived at the foot of a prodigious large cross, fixed up where a barbarous murder had formerly been committed."

"Beside the cross stood a mule, ready saddled and bridled, the bridle fixed to the cross; but as he drew near he saw no owner for the mule, at which he very much wondered. He stopped his ass to look round, but could see nobody. 'This is wonderful strange!' said he to himself; 'this mule could not have been placed here without hands; and why, above all places in the world, place it on a cross? I should have told you, that his surprise at the sight of the mule made him forget to repeat *Ave Maria*; a thing never to be omitted on these occasions by a good Christian.'

"Well, there he stood a considering what the mule should do in such a place without a master."

"'Tis a thousand pities," thought he, 'so fine an animal should be so exposed to the weather. He will be starved—some brute of a man will come by and take him away. Why then may I not exchange him for my worn-out ass, who is more used to hardship than this sleek looking beast.'

"Having settled this point of humanity with his conscience, he dismounted, and taking off the bridle, hung that of his ass in the place. He then mounted, overjoyed at the exchange, and admiring the adventure; but he no sooner touched the back of the mule, than away he galloped, scouring along the road, as if he would break the neck of his rider."

"The traveler endeavored in vain to check him by the bridle; he rode the more furiously, leaping prodigious chasms, and tearing down the most frightful precipices. The poor fellow would not have given a

pin for his neck, and his bones were shaken in his skin like a sack of cucumbers. But now we come to the most tragical part of the story."

"Well," said Raolo, with a laugh, "let us have it by all means; what became of the traveler?"

"You shall hear," replied Martin. "The mule continued to drive on at a prodigious pace till he was all in a violent foam, passing along the narrowest roads within an inch of the edge; sometimes tearing up hills, and then flying down, till the traveler was almost dead with fatigue and fright."

"Prythee, get him a little faster to the end of his journey," said I.

"Please, your excellenza," replied Martin, "he went as fast as he could; and it is impossible to finish the story before he ends his career."

"Well, he rode onwards, without being stopped or interrupted by anything on the way; nor did he meet with any living creatures in this long course. He pulled hard at the reins to check the mule, but still he continued to ride on as he did at first; and what was more strange, his swiftness seemed even to increase."

"O, intolerable!" exclaimed I. "If he galloped as fast as thy tongue, and to as little purpose, I fancy he never reached the end of his journey."

"Yes, señor," continued Martin, in a serious tone, "he galloped at a terrible rate, till he, all on a sudden, stood still, in a narrow, savage-looking hollow, where some thorns formed a cover overhead, and concealed even the twinkling of a star. The traveler did not at all like the looks of this spot. He began to spur and kick the beast, to make him go on, but it was all in vain—he stood stock still. He beat him over the head with his whip, but the mule only hung his ears; he began to coax him, but only wagged his tail, and would not stir one step."

"I'm afraid," said I, "we are pretty much in the same situation; tell us, however, how long he stood in that position."

"I can't say exactly how long, señor, but there he stood, nor would all the traveler could devise, make him stir one step. He dismounted and tugged at the bridle; the mule put his fore feet to the ground, and stood firm. He went behind, and endeavored to shove him forward; but he might as well have attempted to push down one of the mountains. He began to think his feet might be fixed in some trap, and he lifted them one by one, but the mule would not stir."

"And there your tale remains," said I, "like the traveler's mule."

"No, no," replied he, "I am not at the end of it. The traveler in amazement mounted again, and the mule began to neigh so loud that all the cliffs echoed the sound, and he thought himself surrounded by a thousand others. The ground on which he stood began gradually to move."

"Bravo, bravo! honest Martin," cried I. "This is a promising story truly. So, as the mule would not go, the ground was obliged to undertake the journey!"

"You are pleased to be merry, señor; but I can assure you this is no joke. The ground, as I said, began to move, and to sink downwards, till the traveler, in a trice, found himself up to the stirrup. In a moment after it was up to his breast; and before he could raise his hands to cross himself, he found himself in a cavern, where three fierce robbers, with whiskers from ear to ear, and rapiers that trailed upon the ground, seized him at once by the collar."

"Ah! dog of a wretch!" cried they, in a voice of thunder, 'you would have stolen the mule, and the mule has stolen you. You will be a dead man in a minute, but first tell us what you have got about you.'

"For the sake of St. Dominique," said the traveler, "spare my life. You will get nothing by killing me, gentlemen—I have not a maravedi about me. All my wealth was upon the back of my poor ass, doubloons and dollars. I had not the time to remove them on to the back of that devil of a beast, before he rode away with me. If you will only give me time I will go and fetch it."

"No, no," replied the thieves, 'we are not so easily done as that comes to; we will fetch it ourselves. In the meanwhile we shall keep you safe enough.' With that they dragged the poor trembling wretch into a long chamber of the cave, where he felt nothing beneath his feet but skulls and dry bones of travelers who had been trepanned in the same way, and his heart sunk within him."

"When he supposed the thieves at a distance, he began to think how useless it was for him to spend his time studying over death's heads when he was no hermit; and taking up a strong thigh bone, he made use of it to force the door of his dungeon."

"An excellent repast of meat and wine stood upon a table; and being willing to have another meal before he should be starved to death, he fell to. The wine made him merry; and seeing a dress belonging to one of the robbers, he stripped off his own, being naturally fond of exchanges."

"He admired the fierceness of his figure, armed with pistols and a long Toledo, and began to lose all apprehension of the thieves. He considered, however, that it might be as well to leave them to themselves when they should return; and as doubtless the mule, whose well knew the way in, must know the way out, he loaded him with some bags of hard coin, that the weight might cool his courage, and mounting him began to drub him."

"The mule, no doubt thinking by the dress of his rider, that he had one of his masters to deal with, immediately struck into a long and dark passage, where the traveler was obliged to lay upon his breast along the animal's neck, to prevent his own being broken. A glimpse of light at last appeared, and he found himself in a deep hollow, surrounded by rocks, from which the mule had a difficulty to extricate himself."

"I would not run so many dangers for all the money he got by it," said Pedro.



"What became of the traveler's ass, Martin?" said Raolo.

"Aye, truly, I had forgot, my honest cousin. There is a very long story goes about that same ass; he had a very droll name, and that was Raolo."

We all laughed at the fellow's humor, which had prevented our thinking too much of our situation, being completely drenched with the rain. It continued to pour down, while the wind pelted us unmercifully, and almost took the mules off their feet.

We had still a considerable distance to ride before we came to the inn; and then the cheerless prospect presented of no accommodation—a general rule all over Spain.

"This is bitter weather, indeed," said Pedro; "the poor beasts will be fated to death, and what a fine day we had of it. Diablo! if I don't think the inn has run away like the traveler's mule."

After this observation, we dropped into a profound silence, till fear getting the better of Pedro, he first began to whistle, and then to sing with all his strength, as if to outnoise the storm, and deafen himself to its roaring. Martin and Jerome frequently ejaculated Diablo! or crossed themselves as the gusts of wind caused them to bend over the necks of their mules. Raolo and myself rode on in silence; till Raolo ventured to observe, that we had not been so nearly drowned for many a day; nor undergone so much fatigue since the storming of Fort Oran.

"What a charming prospect!" said Raolo, "we should not have a storm on this heap of mountains; were it now for that which every way we look, it is equally dark, not so much to be seen as an old stump, stretching out his arms, like a giant, to devour travelers by night."

"It is now infinitely more sublime," said I. "Now you may fancy anything you please, and dress up the waste in your own style. I wish, however, this inn was a little nearer. It is the only addition I have any desire at present to see, made to the prospect."

"I should not wonder if we passed it in the dark," said Raolo; "we keep in the middle of the road to prevent breaking our necks down the steep, and we shall chance to ride all night."

"O beatissimo nuestra senora!" vociferated Pedro several times. "'Tis there! 'tis there!"

"What is there?" demanded I.

"The inn! the inn!" cried he. "O beatissimo nuestra senora! we shall now sleep in a sound skin, and hear the storm singing about us all the while!"

"You are run mad," said Raolo. "I see no inn, nor any signs of it; where about does it stand?"

"There, there," cried he, "right before us. Don't you see that little light sparkling through the windows? Aye, there we shall have a comfortable fire, and some of the best aqua vite in all Spain."

I now discerned the faint glimmer of a lamp, which promised no very cheerful welcome: but any shelter being preferable to the pelting storm, we quickened our mules, and soon found ourselves at the door.

The muleteers called aloud on Master Polo, the host; but Polo did not choose to hear anything but the storm, and all their efforts were useless. Martin dismounted and thundered with the handle of his whip against the door, but nobody returned any answer.

"They are all dead for certain," said he, "or deserve to be, for treating us in this scurvy way." Then discharging a stone at the door, as if he intended to break it open, he called aloud upon the host, "If this is the treatment I am to meet with," cried he, "I shall change my bait, and never call, as I cross the mountains."

"If you never stop here," said I, "where will you put up? for we have not seen anything like a house since morning."

"Why, that's true," replied Martin; "but when a man's drowned, and hungry, and dry, and cold, he never stops to choose his words."

"Nor must he choose his inn upon these wilds," said Raolo.

"This is a selfish fellow, truly," said I; "he knows civility is a useless ingredient where there is no choice. If he will not stir for our sake, let us try what he will do for his own. We must use a stratagem of war. Call out fire lustily, my boys."

The expedient had the desired effect. Polo opened the window in a hurry, to know what was the matter, and where the fire might be; but seeing all safe, he was retiring, muttering out his at our disturbing his rest.

"Look'e, Master Polo," cried Martin; "by all the holy Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists and Martyrs! if you don't come down and open the door, I will set fire to your hovel, that we may dry ourselves as we stand!"

This brought Polo again to the window, demanding who we were, and what we wanted at that late hour.

"Come down quickly and open the door," cried Raolo, "or you will have occasion to repent it the longest day you live. Are the king's officers to stand begging at the door of a paltry inn, while a fellow like you is dozing in a warm bed?"

Polo now made haste to open the door, terrified at the sound of the king's officers, and we entered a little miserable place, with a mud floor almost in a puddle. At the further end was an open fire-place, without one spark to warm this wretched place.

Raolo seized some fagots, and I helped him to place them on the stove. A large fire was quickly made, and some rancid bacon and oil, prepared by a little meager figure of a woman, the picture of poverty and ill-nature. She was only half dressed, in her hurry to attend us, when she knew the respectability of the guests; and her brown skin peeped forth here and there, in no very tempting manner.

Hunger gave us appetite to the homely dish she provided; and a few glasses of aqua vite (which was excellent, being brought by the smugglers who travel this chain of mountains) banished our sufferings in the storm from recollection.

I was so overcome with weariness, having for some

preceding nights scarcely slept at all, that I desired nothing so much as a place to lay down upon. This was impossible on the ground apartment, unless I would have shared the floor with the hogs; and after some little treaty, the hostess agreed that I should take their bed, while they would sit up. But of all the vile places I ever saw, I think this was the worst. It was composed of rags, so dirty, that it had certainly never been washed since it was first new; add to this that the vermin skipped about in flocks, and you will not wonder that weariness could not reconcile me to it.

A parcel of old mats, boughs, and a pair of hampers were then heaped upon the floor to keep me from the mud; and placing my portmanteau for pillow, I fell asleep to dream of Virginia and happiness.

The next morning we proceeded on our journey, without meeting a single adventure, and arrived towards night at Calatrava; where I discharged the muleteers, and halted a day to recover the fatigue of passing the mountains. I hired a carriage for Toledo, to depart early the second morning; meanwhile I amused myself with viewing the town and its curiosities.

In strolling round towards evening, I came opposite the great church, which is a singular piece of fine workmanship. The people entering to vespers, I joined in the crowd. A great number of tapers were arranged as for some festival, and I walked through a long range of beautiful columns into the body of the church.

I had not taken my seat many minutes, when a stranger entered and took a seat beside me. He was so wrapped about the head that his features were obscured and he seemed wholly absorbed in devotional duties.

I observed that from time to time, he wiped a tear from his eye. I made no doubt but some heavy distress hung upon him; or some grievous action disquieted his conscience. "I will speak to this man," thought I; "and if I have the power to help him, I will see what is to be done. Providence has, perhaps, brought us into this place for that purpose."

The music which suddenly arose from a soft andante movement into a grand chorus, diverted my attention; and when I looked around again, he was gone. I felt sensible regret at his sudden departure; in which, perhaps, there was as much of curiosity as charity. I arose and walked slowly down the nave of the church, amused by the various statues and ornaments of fretwork, constructed by the Goths, which had an admirable effect by the light of tapers, and touched the mind with regret for the transience of human affairs; while piety, inspired by the solemn organ, seemed to point to scenes of more desirable happiness.

I was somewhat surprised, on perceiving the stranger who had excited my curiosity, leaning against a column in a dark part of the church, so lost in deep reflection, that he did not appear to regard any passing object.

"Shall I interrupt his meditations?" thought I; "and will he not consider me an unwelcome intruder? There are moments in devotions, and situations in sorrow, which require not observance, and shrink from the most refined services of friendship."

I turned half round, in doubt how to act, when a motion made by the stranger, fixed my resolution to address him. "You select, sir," said I, "the most retired part of the building—no doubt as most suitable to the subject of your contemplations."

"Yes, senor," he replied. "This gloomy building fits well the ideas fixed upon my mind. Melancholy loves to brood in twilight shades."

"Will you deem me impertinent, if I seem to pry into those shades myself? I have not escaped without accidents of an unpleasant nature."

"I know it," said he solemnly. "But to what do you particularly refer, marquis?"

"Ha!" cried I, starting in amazement, "do you know me?"

"I do," replied he, lifting his forefinger to his mouth, as a signal of silence. "I know you, Marquis Albert de Denia. I ought to know you! I know also your secrets—I am no stranger in the castle of Montilvo." He paused, uttering a deep groan, while I felt horror creeping upon me. I fixed my eyes upon him, but the obscure light reflected dimly on his figure.

"Do you then know the secret of that terrible chamber?" said I. "Do you know?"

A drop of blood fell from his nose on the back of my hand, as I held it out in the act of speaking. I paused at the moment I was going to mention the dreadful objects I had there seen. The stranger, or whatever he was, waiting my continuance, I was again opening my lips, when another drop startled me; but fancying it merely a casualty, I began:

"Do you know?"—A third drop fell upon my hand, and my lips closed in silent horror.

"Sure," thought I, "this is a warning not to mention those secrets—not to give sound to the object of my sight."

"I do know," said he, "all the secrets of that place; but what particular would you express?"

"You know then why I am silent," replied I; "these are subjects too dreadful to mention. May I inquire who you are that possess this undesirable knowledge?"

"Who I am," said he, "you can never know—that knowledge would be death to you. But remember this, and as you follow my advice you will do well—terrible, indeed, would be the breaking of my injunctions. You must depart this very night; though not in the conveyance you intended. Padilla has sent an agent in pursuit of you, who will arrive at this place about midnight. You will find a chaise waiting at your inn; hire it, and be gone in an hour."

"But why such haste?" said I. "In a town like Calatrava, assassins will not find protection."

"Be thankful for this warning. Is it for you to inquire the reason? Is not my standing here before you reason sufficient?"

He said this in a stern voice, and turning quickly into the dark, I lost him among the columns in an instant.

For some time I stood in a reverie of perplexed reflection. The accident was strange and unaccountable. From the partial glance I had of his features, I could form no recollection of his person: and his word impressed upon me an awe, which the mystery of supernatural agency inspires. I doubted in my own mind, whether it were the wandering spirit of Count Fernandez or my guardian genius, which had put on mortal form to warn me of impending danger. The benevolence of his advice was not to be mistaken; and I carried my superstition so far, as to suppose the drops of blood which fell upon my hand, tokens of the ill that would follow on refusing his counsel.

Ruminating on this singular adventure, I returned to the inn; and notwithstanding the warning I had just received, I started back at sight of a chaise which that moment stood in the yard. The postilion was rubbing down his mules, and ordering a fresh supply, saying he was going to return to Toledo in an hour.

"Who are your passengers then?" said I; "and where did you come from?"

He replied from Toledo, with a gentleman who had not been in Calatrava an hour, and had ordered him to this inn, where he was to find a person who would return with him; but on inquiry there was no one there unengaged.

This was to me a full confirmation. "Do you know the person you brought hither?" said I.

"No," replied he, "I did not see his face; he was wrapped up as if he was ill."

"In a long dark cloak?"

"Yes," returned the lad; "the very same."

"We are perfectly right, then," said I. "I am the person you are to meet—make yourself ready—we will ride all night."

I called Raolo, and gave him orders to get everything in readiness to be gone in an hour. He expressed his wonder by his looks, and his unwillingness by his delays; nor should I have been ready had I not prompted him forward.

My eagerness to depart at length overcame his respect, and he could not avoid inquiring if I had heard any sudden news.

"Yes, Raolo," said I; "it is of the utmost importance that I should hasten to Madrid, from which I have already been too long absent. See, then, that our pistols are in order; load them with a brace of bullets, and take your cane-sword from the baggage."

"You expect to meet the enemy, I suppose, senor?" said he, brightening with an expression of bravery in his countenance; "we shall be a match for something more than our number."

"You are a brave fellow, Raolo," I replied. "Here are a couple of pistoles for you; and remember, I promise you a present if we arrive safe at Madrid."

He drew back, ashamed to accept what seemed a bribe to his duty, and afraid to affront me by the refusal, I read his sentiments in the glow which suffused his cheek, and putting up the money, "Well," said I, "I will be your banker; if we are robbed on the road I shall then be accountable." He seemed to thank me by a look; and quitting the room he made haste to execute my orders.

After a hasty meal, Raolo brought my pistols, and placed his own in his belt. "Everything is ready, your excellenza," said he. "The night is fine and clear—there is not finer weather in the world for traveling; though there is no moon there are plenty of stars; and your excellenza used to like to gaze on them when we lay in camp, many a night."

"Aye, aye, Raolo," said I; "many a night we have lain there; but now we must be doing other duty."

The postilion sat upon his mules, cheering himself with a dram of aqua vite. Raolo mounted a horse he had hired, and which was to be left at Toledo; and I entered the chaise, which drove away at a furious rate.

## CHAPTER X.

I gave myself up, as usual, to a variety of reflections, harassing my mind with conjectures which led to no positive conclusion. My spirits seemed strangely depressed, which I imputed to the surprise of so singular an incident, and I endeavored to rally my own weakness.

For three hours we continued to ride with speed. The night was fine and clear. I endeavored to trace the stars as we whirled along, but my mind admitted of no outward amusement, and I relapsed again in thoughtfulness.

Sometime after, I was roused by Raolo, who informed me that two men, on horseback, were advancing, whom it might be as well to prepare for.

"We need not fear a number inferior to our own," replied I, "and, probably, not so well armed. Your pistols are ready, I suppose."

"Yes, yes," answered he, "we shall show them sport: I was only afraid your excellenza might have been sleeping."

"Did you ever know me to sleep on my post?"

"No, senor, but you might have been sleeping to refresh before the hour of battle."

"Very well, Raolo," replied I, laughing; "'tis a pity you were not born a courtier; keep a good lookout and beware of surprise."

It was not long before I heard the clattering of horses, and two men of very suspicious appearance rode by us. They eyed us with a scrutinizing look, but from some motive rode on without attacking us. Possibly, thought I, they propose waiting for us in the narrow part of the road; or in some gloomy hollow, where we shall not have the warning of their horses' feet.

Raolo came up to the chaise-door, and desired I would command the driver to halt a few minutes. "I do not like that fellow," said he; "I thought I observed some intelligent signs pass between him and



these ill-looking fellows. Will your excellenza question him?"

"Do you think he will confess anything, then? Depend upon it, he would not criminate himself."

"Your excellenza knows best," replied Raolo. "I thought it my duty to tell my suspicions. Have you got your powder-flask? for the hard riding, or else my carrying one of the pistols in my hand, has dashed out the priming."

"That must have been very careless," replied I; "ask the postboy if he has got a flask—I cannot find mine." Raolo then inquired of the driver, who answered very sulkily that he never carried any such combustible stuff about him.

"Never mind," said I; "take half the priming from the other pistol." Raolo took it from the holster. "By the holy pope!" exclaimed he, "this is in the same case."

"Impossible!" cried I, starting at a thought which flashed across me; "you say you loaded the pistol before we set out?"

"Yes, I am certain of that," replied he; "I put a brace of bullets into each and then laid them down in the kitchen, while I just stepped into the yard to look at the horse I was to hire, and when I returned, there they lay."

"Ah!" exclaimed I, "could anything be more thoughtless; somebody has been playing tricks, and we are caught in a fine trap. Be so good as to examine if the charge is in."

I examined my own at the same time, and was confounded to find them without any ball, and filled up with ashes.

"We are betrayed," said I, in a low voice. "Some traitor has done this. We are fallen into an ambuscade. Your life and mine will, probably, be the forfeiture of your neglect."

I leaped out of the chaise, and going up to the postilion, brandished my saber over his head. "Villain," cried I, "you are in this plot—confess! Tell me who has employed you, or I will send your head rolling under the feet of your mules."

He begged me to have mercy upon him for the sake of a large family. "What is that to the purpose?" cried I; "do you provide for them by robbery and murder? Villain, speak, quickly, all you know of this infernal scheme, or I will scrape the flesh from off your bones."

I dragged the rascal to the ground, for I was extremely agitated, and certainly should have killed him on the spot, had he not, on his knees, confessed, that about noon, two men, the one like a gentleman, the other like his servant, came to the inn where he lived at Calatrava, at the farther end of the town, to where I had lodged, and hiring him as for a journey to Toledo, gave him a trifle to ride a couple of leagues from the town, and to return by the Toledo road; that one of them went with him and put up at the inn where I was, directing him in what he should say, the other returning to the town alone; that when my servant had charged the pistols, the horse was brought purposely to draw him out, in which time the servant entered and unloaded the pistols, telling him (the post-boy) they were to arrest the gentleman on the road by an order from the king; and took this caution to prevent bloodshed by our resistance; that they were to ride past us on the road, and if all remained in the same state, he was to cry *hem!* and smack his whip twice in the air as they rode by; but if we had discovered the change put upon us, he was to cry *who goes there!* but not to interpose in case of an attack. And lastly, that about a league further they were to wait for us in a dell, where the narrowness of the road would not admit my servant on the side of the chaise, by which means his assistance would be cut off. "And this, your highness," continued he, "is all I know, if these words were the last I was to speak in this world, and may all the martyrs curse me if I know any more."

I silenced his clamorous cries for mercy, by ordering him to arise. "Your treachery," said I, "does not merit pardon; but I will grant your life on condition you follow my orders. What sort of a person was he you call the master?"

"A dark, stern-looking man, exactly like an inquisitor, and, indeed, I did think he belonged to the holy office."

"Was he not tall, his eyebrows bent, and meeting together?"

A reply in the affirmative confirmed my suspicion on Don Padilla. I next inquired the figure of his servant.

"He was a terrible-looking man," said he, "with a malicious eye, so penetrating, that I was afraid when he looked at me."

This, thought I, must be Jacques. I have never seen him but in deceiving lights, and this is near my picture of him. I trembled for the safety of Fernando, when I had this instance of their malignant designs, and knew they must have either met, or passed each other on a road, where murder and outrage was common at noon-day. I had no time to spare for reflection in the present moment. I stripped off my scarlet mantle and exchanging with the postilion, obliged him to take my place in the chaise, at the same time solemnly vowing if he attempted to betray us by any signal, I would, in the first instance, wreak my vengeance upon him.

I then mounted myself upon the mule, and concealing my saber under my dress, I ordered Raolo to keep as usual, behind, and, on the first assault, to charge at once, with his sword.

Having made this arrangement, we drove forward, my heart beating with a variety of emotions; I remembered the adventure in the church, and I had no longer any doubt but the mysterious stranger had been Jacques, who had followed me, at a distance, to that sanctuary, where my own credulity contributed to betray me into his power. The drops of blood upon my hand now seemed an omen of my danger, which

then I did not interpret aright. My apprehension for the safety of Fernando was extremely painful, and contributed not a little to detach my mind from the immediate dangers that surrounded myself.

We rode forward till we arrived at the hollow part of the road, above which, on either side, were high cliffs, tufted with underwood; a place extremely well chosen for such an expedition.

No intimation gave us warning that any person was near, and I continued to drive forward at a rapid rate, urging the poor beasts at their utmost speed into the hollow, without making any show of apprehension. No sound interrupted the silence of night, but the noise we ourselves made; and, being arrived at the middle of the pass, I began to think our danger over, when a pistol was fired into the chaise from amongst the bushes which overtopped the road.

I took no notice of this assault, as we could not see any individual, and admired the design of this infamous transaction. I gave the mules a lash, when, possibly angry at the postilion for not answering their signal, one of them fired a shot at me, which hit one of the mules and caused him to plunge and rear in an ungovernable manner. In an instant after, a carbine was fired into the chaise, and a loud cry from the miserable postilion made them conclude they had executed their business.

I judged from the number of shots that they had spent their first fire; and calling to Raolo, I commanded him to follow me, sword in hand. We clambered up the banks, and made good our entrance into the hanging thicket, without receiving any injury from two or three pistol shots which were fired at random.

When we reached the top of the bank, we found our selves unopposed; nor could we, through the darkness of the night, discern the foe; who had not sufficient courage to wait the assault, though they had only the resistance of Raolo to fear, as they must have judged the valor of the supposed postilion a feint.

After searching round for some time, that they might not escape us by concealing themselves, we plunged our swords into every bush within fifty paces, and it was a matter of conjecture how they could possibly have secured so silent a retreat.

Finding our researches useless, we returned to the road, but the chaise was gone. This was an unpleasant circumstance to persons in our situation. All my baggage and letters were in it. But fortunately none from Fernando relative to our suspicions, nor any document that could give Padilla light into our intentions, supposing that he should have an opportunity to examine.

The most probable conjecture was, that the wounded mule had communicated its fright to its companion, and run away with the postilion.

Raolo's horse stood quietly at about one hundred yards distance, and mounting him together, we proceeded at an easy rate, Raolo delighting himself with the courage of the enemy, and the military trick we had played upon them.

We continued slowly forward, without meeting the smallest trace of the chaise. Towards the dawn of day we arrived at a little farm-house by the roadside. We alighted to seek some refreshment and to provide some better conveyance. The instant we stopped at the gate, the owner of the cottage came up to us; and with visible emotion, inquired if we were the persons who had been robbed on the road.

I was surprised at this question, and replied, that we had been assaulted, but, I believed, not by common robbers, demanding, at the same time, his reasons for the question.

"About two hours since," said he, "somebody knocked violently at the gate. It was dark, and I was just rising, for we begin our labors betimes. I was coming out of the door with a lantern, to see what was the matter, when two men strangely muffled up, ordered me to extinguish the light and follow them, or I should be a dead man in a minute. I could do no other than obey them. A chaise stood on the road, and I saw somebody in it, but they did not speak. 'Here,' said one of the men, 'take this parcel and these trunks, and give them to the next travelers who will own them.'

"I knew not what to do in the business, as I feared being called to account, some way or other, as having a share in the plunder, and yet I wondered they should base free to part with it unless they had taken out all the valuable articles. Well, seniors, their repeated threats frightened me, and having laid all the bundles upon the ground, I took up a trunk to carry it into the house. When I returned for another, two cavaliers, who were mounted on horses, and the chaise, with the person who did not speak, were gone. Two of the bundles they took from the chaise are stained with blood, and I fear some poor gentleman has been murdered by these ruffians; and now that I see you, I hope it is not your master who has been robbed. I assure you it was from force I admitted the goods."

I had waited without interrupting him. "I believe you, my honest fellow," said I, taking off the postilion's coat; "this garment deceived you. I am a nobleman, who has been traitorously waylaid, and I imagine these articles you mention are mine; if so, they bear the name of Denis. Can you describe the persons of the men you saw?"

"It was too dark," replied he; "they were in a tremendous passion, cursing and swearing at some mistake. I heard one of them say it would be best to fly, and the other muttered something of which I could only make out the word—body."

I was very well pleased at this information, and the countryman, whose name, I think, was Tornes, being an open-hearted hospitable man, we sat down to a rural breakfast, to us extremely welcome, after the events of the night.

I made no doubt, from the blood of the bundles, and

the words of the men, that the postilion had received his death from their hands; and thus it generally is, said I, "though not always in so visible and signal a manner, that the intentions of villains devolve upon themselves. Our destruction, this night appeared inevitable; betrayed by a miscreant to the vengeance of two men, who laugh at crimes if they can perpetrate them with impunity. Confiding in our own arms, when that confidence might have been destruction; no way to escape or defend ourselves appearing; yet their designs are rendered abortive, and their weak and wretched instrument destroyed by themselves."

My spirits experienced a considerable flow upon this event, the landscape from the window appeared delightful, and the loved plains of Grenada seemed again to bloom before me. Gentle swellings loaded with grain broke the continuity of the level ground, and varied cultivation diversified the prospect to the eye, and painted the face of nature with a variety of tints.

It was now the autumn, and the glow of ripening fruitage gladdened the view. Nature's richest stores were spread before her children, and there wanted only the thankful heart and the tranquil mind to spread happiness over the scene.

After a few hour's rest I dispatched Raolo to Toledo to procure a chaise. While he was absent, I indulged myself in a reverie of pleasing reflection, which the imagery of this fine province increased; and while I sat wandering over the views before me, the tender recollection of Virginia stole upon me, and the high mountains that divided us, seemed as a barrier to our meeting any more.

Nothing could be more inviting to the frenzy of composition which lovers universally feel than the glowing country before me, and I have no doubt but love gave birth to the muses. While I sat in the window, I wrote these lines, the fault of which you must charge to the folly of love, for, though it is the origin of rhyming, it by no means inspires the higher species of poetry.

## THE SIGH.

Go, gentle sigh, to ease my breast,  
And on Virginia's bosom rest;  
Go, gentle sigh, my heart now swelling,  
And in her bosom make thy dwelling.

Go, sigh, and bearing as you go  
The scents of all the flowers that blow,  
Wait each perfume that breathes of pleasure,  
To her, the pride of Nature's treasure.

Go, gentle sigh, and speed thy way,  
Warm from my heart without delay  
Pour in her ear the lovelorn ditty,  
And sweetly soothe her soul to pity.

Go, vagrant, go, o'er dale and hill,  
Nor stay thee near the tinkling rill;  
Nor whisper with the whistling rushes,  
Nor linger where the water flushes.

Let not the blushing village lass  
Attract, as o'er the lawns you pass;  
Nor let her witching graces stay thee,  
Lest tales unmeaning should betray me.

Go, gentle sigh, to where the maid  
Reposes in the tranquil shade;  
Her ear with love's complainings greeting,  
Soft as thyself; and, ah! as fleeting.

Or, if she thee disdain to hear,  
Thy pinions lightly waving near;  
Still in her wanton tresses straying,  
Or in her garments idly playing.

Go, mingle with her balmy breath,  
Nor fear her anger will be death;  
For life renewed shall bless thy daring,  
With her ethereal zephyrs sharing.

Return, then, gentle sigh, return;  
With rapture flow, with ardor burn;  
Inhaled by me (with bliss past telling),  
My breast shall be thy constant dwelling.

By the time I had run my thoughts to the last fancy! Raolo returned with a chaise. He had made inquiry upon the road, but had gained no information, and I made no doubt of their having, before the day should betray them, turned aside into some obscure cross-road, where they might dispose of the postilion; or, probably, concealed themselves in a forest, not above a league distant, where they might bury him, and depart at night.

At Toledo I made no delay, being impatient again to visit my paternal home, from which I had been near two years absent. My mother received me with a transport of satisfaction. After entreaty I consented to quit the army and become a civil member of society. I found my fortune as extensive as the honors it had to support, and I seemed to have only one wish to gratify to render me above the frowns of fortune; but without which her gifts lost half their value.

I received letters from Fernando amongst the military dispatches, which tranquilized the fears I entertained for his safety. He spoke of his good health, and hinted at the mysteries which yet disturbed him. He seemed unwilling to trust matters of consequence by this doubtful conveyance, and I might acknowledge, that I could only surmise his situation from dark and distant phrases.

I employed a nobleman of my acquaintance, and a person, for whom I knew Don Padilla had some respect, to interfere in my favor, making him propositions that might have satisfied a prince, but he rejected all my overtures with unqualified contempt, protesting, by all the universe, he would sooner hang his daughter upon



a tree of the forest, than give her to a man, whom he considered as his most virulent enemy, and whom he hated with the greatest bitterness.

It was easy for me to guess the fears that rankled in his mind. He was far from ignorant that I was informed of his secrets, and wanted only positive proof to strip him of all his possessions. I likewise knew, that in the midst of all his luxury, he lamented having nothing but girls, who would carry his fortune into other houses if they married, and his name would be forever extinct. This passion for an heir, united with licentiousness, had led him several times to offer his hand to different ladies since the death of Lady Zidana, and their refusal had increased the disease of his mind.

The last letter I received from Fernando is near twelve months since. It informed me that, from reasons of imperious necessity, he had changed his regiment, joined one that was under orders of embarkation for Cúeta in Barbary; he begged me to remember his unfortunate engagements, and pity the ill fortune of my friend.

I have applied through various channels to discover if he yet lives, but ineffectually; all my information being that he was taken prisoner in a sally made against the Moors. I have wearied you with a tedious narrative, marquis, but I shall come immediately to what interests myself.

It was now nearly six months since I had become the slave of superstition, or the victim of a deep and unrelenting vengeance I had no power to avert.

It was in the gardens of Aranjuez, where I delight to ramble, that I may indulge my taste for reflection, that I first experienced this strange and inconceivable event.

I had laid down upon a bank of flowers, watching the dimpling waves of the Tagus as they chased each other. Sometimes wearying my imagination about the fate of my friend, or picturing the pleasures I should share in this romantic spot, if Virginia could sit beside me, or ramble through the fragrant shades of orange groves and myrtle alleys; when I heard a voice clearly and distinctly pronounce my name three times.

I looked round to discover who it was, not knowing that any one was near me, but all again remained silent, and I could not perceive any persons in the garden. I called to inquire who wanted me. "Listen!" said a clear and soft voice, at which I arose, but could see nobody, though, to my judgment, the voice seemed within a few paces. I paused in wonder, and the same voice said: "Listen, Marquis Albert de Denia, thou must die!"

An effecting palpitation seized me. I had scarce power to stand, much less to demand an explanation of this unseen. I heard not the smallest rustle amongst the shrubs. I sat down, for I was unable to stand, and revolved in my mind all the omens of supernatural incidents which had attended me. The advice of my father's death, the drops of blood in the church of Calatrava confirmed my mind in the truth of this indefinite oracle.

I waited in dreadful apprehension, expecting every moment that my ears would be pervaded with a repetition of this fearful prophecy, or that my sight would be shocked by some awful phantom; but no shade or sound came near me, except the sighs of the wind amongst the leaves.

I endeavored to reason myself into spirits by attributing the whole to a temporary delusion of high-wrought imagination; but what imagination could embody the winds, or give to the breezes articulate sounds?

The prediction fastened on my weakened soul; all the energies of my mind could not repel its attack. You know the gardens of Aranjuez are formed on an island in the middle of the Tagus; no person is admitted to land there without permission of the gardeners, or entitled by rank. I inquired of them if any stranger had been admitted; but, for several hours, they had seen no one except myself. For what purpose, also, would any person take the trouble to act a farce of this nature?

Thus I perplexed myself, and the following day repaired to the same spot, which, indeed, was my favorite place in the garden. I walked cautiously round it, examining the rose trees and other sweet-scented shrubs, which formed a little wilderness of fragrance, and, having satisfied myself that no human being was near, I sat down to wait the oracular sounds.

I waited a long while, every moment fearing, yet expecting to hear the same voice. I did not wait in vain. I heard myself again called, and again my death was pronounced. On the third day the same singular mandate came to my ears, but after that time I heard it no more.

I wondered every morning, when I awoke, that I could again perceive the clear beams of the light. So powerful was the effect of this vague mandate that I fancied my health to be gradually declining, and felt a decay of all my faculties.

To relieve my mind from this burden (for I was ashamed to confide in any person, lest I should only excite ridicule at my credulity), I endeavored to find amusement in public assemblies; but wherever I went the words—*Marquis Albert de Denia, thou shalt die!* rung in my ears, and pervaded every moment of pleasure.

I endeavored to reason myself into better judgment; I know that I must die, said I; there needed no superior agency to persuade me of that truth, but when is the question. On this the voice said nothing, and this was the only point where more than human intelligence was wanting.

This consideration gave me hope. I wondered with myself at the strange turn my mind had taken so different from the common course of human reflections. I became fond of study, and religious being a subject suitable to the then tone of my mind, I frequently attended its duties. The solemnities of the church ceremonial admirably fitted my thoughts, and I began, insensibly, to lose a taste for life. I sighed for some friend to communicate with, and the memory of Fernando perpetually occurred. I had little doubt but he had fallen into some secret snare, laid for him by the agency of Padilla, but it was not possible for me to revenge his death.

One Sunday evening I had been at vespers, when a funeral dirge had been chanted, and the solemn service particularly touched my soul with the most melancholy ideas. Such, thought I, as I leaned upon a pillar, will be the sounds that these very walls may vibrate when I myself shall be stretched upon the cold bier. The same solemnities will accompany my inanimate body to the tomb, when I shall moulder into dust and incorporate with the elements. What then, and where will be this certain something within me, which now reflects and is?

Lost in profound meditation I returned home, and after a hasty repast, I retired to rest. In the middle of the night I was awakened by a heavy sigh, which seemed as from some person in the room. I was startled, and demanded who was there. No one answered, and, thinking myself deceived, I turned again to sleep. But I had scarcely closed my eyes, before a deeper sigh caught my ear. I started up in bed and looked round, but could not see anything.

I listened to catch any sound, if the person should stir, and again I heard the same voice that I had heard in the garden, at Aranjuez, pronounce the fatal words—"Listen! Marquis Albert de Denia, thou shalt die."

I sank back on my bed with a deep groan. I expected that the next moment might be my last, and I seemed already to feel the pangs of a final dissolution. I ventured, after a little time, to raise my eyes. I beheld, on the opposite wall, the same dreadful words, in a scroll, circled by death's heads, of various colored fire; my senses faded away before the phenomenon, and it would not have been astonishing if I had actually lost the powers of breathing.

I lay, I know not how long, insensible. I awoke, it is true, but it was only to a certainty that I must soon sleep forever. I resolved, without more delay, to arrange all my temporary concerns, and sent immediately for a notary. My friends wondered at my singular proceedings, and though I could perceive they fancied me a little disordered in my head, I was too tenacious of the secret I possessed to make any one my confidant.

It is wonderful what power the imagination possesses over the body. Persons who tell us we have no souls, because the body ought not to act upon a spiritual being, might as well say we have no bodies, because the mind, which is immaterial, cannot act upon palpable substance.

I wrote a long farewell letter to Virginia, which I charged Raolo personally to deliver after my death. Indeed I had some time indulged the fancy that she herself was already dead, never having heard from Gonzalez, and the remembrance of my dream, upon the stairs of the eastern wing, confirmed all my forebodings. I repeated frequently to myself—yes, charming saint, I shall soon follow thee through those starry regions, where I once beheld thee ascending in glory.

My mother already lamented the untimely death of her son, and my friends gave me over as lost. The claims of honor and ambition could not awaken my attention. I secluded myself wholly within the walls of my palace. My studies were entirely religious, and my amusement the performance of sacred music. This was the only employ that could catch my attention, for my mind sunk fast towards insanity.

## CHAPTER XI.

But it's strange:

And oftentimes, to soothe us to our harm,  
The instruments of darkness tell us truths;  
Win us with honest trifles, to betray us  
In deepest consequence.

ONE of the best physicians in Madrid attended me, but he could not remove the pressure on my spirits. In about a month I was confined to my bed, and my dissolution rapidly approached. Raolo attended me almost night and day, and endeavored to divert my attention with discourses on Virginia, he, no doubt suspecting that half my grief arose from the hopeless situation of my addresses. He exerted all his ingenuity to inspire me with hope, and to destroy the idea that haunted me of her death; but of what avail are arguments when the senses are untuned?

The fever preyed on my spirits, and my strength was exhausted. A burning thirst tormented me, which no medicine could assuage, and I lay in a state of torture. I was emaciated to a skeleton, and ardently desired death, as a relief from a misery which no medicine or ailment could move.

One night, when my strength was fast ebbing away, for the fountain of my life seemed dried up, I lay without power of motion, partly supported by pillows, as I found greatest ease in that position. Raolo sat beside me in a chair, waiting for the period that was to deprive him forever of his master; my mother sat upon one edge of the bed, and her stifled grief gave me pain. I ardently wished for something to cool the intolerable fire which seemed to run along my veins; but I had not power to move my tongue, which was parched to the roof of my mouth. The hour of midnight was sounded by the clocks of Madrid and the profoundest silence remained.

From the breathing of my mother and Raolo, I judged them to be asleep, which I wondered at, considering their attention. I found myself become faint; I endeavored to raise my eyes to take a last look of a parent who had ever treated me with indulgence, before I closed them forever upon mortal and terrene existence.

The lamp burned dim; but whether it was deception

or no, I beheld a person clothed in white, of a most singular fashion, sitting in a chair at the bed's foot. I strained my sight to gaze upon this phantom. The light of the lamp gleamed upon him and I saw clear and distinct the venerable features of my late father. I cannot say I was much alarmed; fear had lost its power, and I lay gazing upon this beloved object with a mixture of pleasure, and wonder and grief. The yellow tint of death overshadowed his countenance, his eyes wanted the keen fire they were wont to express, and when he turned them upon me they appeared glazed and fixed. His dress was like nothing I had ever beheld, and when he stood up, it gave a majesty and solemnity to his figure, which mortality can never assume.

He stretched out his hands towards me as he stood at the foot of my bed. A faint smile spread upon his face, as he pronounced with a hollow, yet soft voice: "Albert, my son, thou art not yet to flow me; thou shalt not yet die." Then pointing with his right hand to a side table where stood some fine fruit my weakness had not permitted me to taste, he again smiled; and raising his eyes with the elevated dignity of religious resignation, he turned silently away, and slowly quitted the chamber.

For some time after the disappearance of the awful figure, my mind was in a state of unutterable satisfaction. The words he had uttered were as a flash of lightning upon the bosom of the agitated ocean. They spoke peace and hope to my soul. I have since inquired with myself whether this appearance could have been reality. The fever I labored under dwelt upon my spirits, and it might be the mere delusion of fleeting images through my brain; but whether it was truth or a fiction, I shall never learn on this side of the grave. Be it what it would, I found strength sufficient to awaken Raolo, and ask for some fruit.

After eating a pomegranate, the burning thirst left me, and I felt new life animate my existence. A prodigious weight seemed removed from my head. I thought clearly, and reasoned with calmness. I recovered my health and strength in the course of a short time, and again ventured abroad into the world, where I received as many congratulations as though I had actually made my appearance from the grave.

My mind possessed a state of tranquillity which diffused satisfaction into my thoughts, and the world and worldly motives again resumed their force. I had but too long neglected to fulfill a particular injunction of my father's will, which was, to repair the mansion house, on the banks of the Tagus, where he usually spent the months of harvest. In this place I hoped to enjoy repose, and as I took no part in public business, I resolved to lead a life of tranquillity and leisure. I dispatched Raolo, with orders to collect workmen, and repair one of the wings, which had long been in a shattered condition; and I proposed to find amusement in the plans I drew up for considerable improvements of the extensive gardens around me.

While I was thus planning schemes of future ease, a new calamity arose in my family, in the sudden death of my mother, who only lay ill twenty-four hours. It seemed as if some malignant spirit had been permitted to overwhelm me with distress. I had scarcely returned from the grave of that tender relation; indeed, I was sitting in my own library the same evening, when a servant put into my hand a letter, which a messenger had just brought me from my old housekeeper in the country. I opened it, and was struck with astonishment and grief at its contents. I believe I have the very letter in my cabinet—yes, this is it:

"HONORED AND DEAR SENOR:

"I am almost killed with affright at the terrible accident that has happened. Raolo came down here and hired a number of workmen, who began pulling and driving, and I thought would have torn the house in pieces. Your excellenza knows the ruined state of the west wing; well, this they began to repair, and were getting forward space for a little time; but alack! who knows what will happen in this world. Only last night we all went to bed well, and this morning—but I must write methodically. Last night, after we had been some time in bed, the wind began to blow, rising to a perfect hurricane. Not a cloud was to be seen, for I was obliged to leave my bed, expecting every moment that the house would tumble upon us. It rocked as if it had been an earthquake. I rang the alarm bell to assemble the servants together. We all of us expected not a stone would be left standing, when all on a sudden we heard such a dreadful crash, as if not only the whole house but the whole world had been dashed in pieces. The servants set up a great scream, and I expected every moment to be crushed in pieces. In an hour the wind became calm, and I then ventured to stir to see what was the matter. The whole west wing, your excellenza, is blown down; two workmen were killed in the ruins. Raolo is nowhere to be found, and I am waiting in the greatest anxiety for your arrival, to give directions."

You may naturally suppose, my dear marquis, the effect such a letter was calculated to have upon me just returning from the funeral of my mother. The account seemed so strange, so out of the course of nature, that I doubted my own eyes. The non-appearance of Raolo afflicted me more than the loss of the west wing. "Some fiend certainly torments me," said I, laying down the letter. "I know not how I have incurred such persecution, unless Don Padilla is in league with the devil." The sentence arose without reflection, but it produced a long train of thought. The objects I had seen in the Castle of Montillo, particularly in that chamber I had accidentally discovered, seemed to give some color to this supposition, and I was within a trifle of sinking again into my former malady.

I sighed earnestly for some friend to whom I might communicate my reflections, but all my acquaintance were too much engaged with their own interest, or too



trifling, to share with me a secret of this nature. I had lately visited places of public amusement; but if within the circle of my acquaintance I could not find a friend, how could I discover that gem beneath the disguise of festive mirth, where all assume manners and characters different from truth?

I hastened the next morning to witness the devastation of my house, and found all things in confusion. The materials were scattered by the wind half over my grounds as if some mischievous spirit had been sporting in the air. I employed a number of people to remove the ruins, where they lay in heaps, if possible to discover Raolo; but, what is inconceivable, not the smallest trace remained of him, and I was almost tempted to credit the story of the servants, who asserted that Lucifer had carried him away in a whirlwind.

I remained near three weeks on my estate to give directions, when learning you return from Portugal, and admiring the character of your conduct there had procured you, which resembles such the friend I had lost, I resolved myself to converse with you, and the events of last night have determined my choice sooner than my caution might otherwise have required.

It was with extreme surprise that I learned this evening, by accident, that Don Padilla and his daughter, Almira, were in Madrid. You may judge from what you have just heard, how much my introduction to Padilla would have been to your disadvantage; I, therefore, employed myself to better purpose, in inquiries amongst the servants; but I have been unable to penetrate into his reasons for immuring Almira, unless to gratify his evil disposition. See, then, my friend, the situation in which I stand; lend me your council, and give me your heart. Let not a whisper of my secret pass over your lips, and we will, if possible, counteract Padilla; and beauty and merit will be our reward.

Here the Marquis of Denia concluded his narrative, which had sunk into the heart of his friend, and raised in his mind wonder he could not conceal, and an interest he resolved to pursue.

"I am yours," said he, reaching out his hand to the marquis. "To obtain Almira and Virginia, to rescue them from this ungenerous treatment, and to bring Don Padilla to justice, is a noble exploit, and what we owe to the public. It is for us who possess wealth and power to step forward as the instruments of justice, to protect the weak, to redress the wrongs of the innocent, and to punish the guilty."

The Marquis of Denia smiled at this ardor of his young friend. "What pity," said he, "we did not live at least, one or two ages ago, we might then have mounted our mettled couriers, and pranced away in glittering armor to rescue ladies, and to fight with giants."

"And why not now," replied Antonio. "Are the refinements of modern times to supersede virtuous actions? Had I been in love with Virginia, I would, ere this, have carried her away, sword in hand, from the castle. What enterprise could be more congenial to a generous mind? The ardor of such an undertaking would have prevented you from sinking into that painful disease, and your reward would have been a prize worth contending for."

"But remember," said Albert, "that it would be her father you had to oppose. You have had no experience of this man. A failure in the attempt would have involved its object in certain ruin, and a convent, for life, would have been the least effects of his vengeance. I have learned from Count Potenza that such is his design with regard to Almira; but his motives are too deeply buried in his own breast, even to rise to the eye of friendship."

Antonio expressed his apprehension at this intimation; he earnestly entreated his friend to think on some expedient to prevent such a design. They discoursed together till the sun had risen above the horizon, and want of sleep made the eyes of Antonio weary; for he had not, like his friend, been accustomed to watching; and they separated under agreement to meet again in the evening.

Antonio retired to his home, and the Marquis of Denia descended to his garden, to plan some means of procuring an interview with Almira. He had some acquaintance with Count Potenza, and he proposed to wait upon him for information. Want of rest the preceding night rendered action unpleasant and he sat in a little arbor of evergreens, watching the playing of a fountain before a sloping green, and settling in his mind to wait upon the count after the hour of the siesta.

The interest Almira had created in the breast of Antonio pleased him, it being a double link to an unequalled friendship, and a chain which bound him in his own service. The fatal incidents which preyed upon his mind by being divided would be lessened; and were no other advantage to result superior to the pleasure of confidence, that alone was inestimable to a man laboring, as he did, under a singular train of events which seemed to mark him as the victim of persecution, he had neither power to foresee or to control.

He endeavored to suggest the reasons which could have induced Don Padilla to take so far a journey, and for such a purpose. Why Almira, rather than Virginia, had incurred his anger, he could not conceive.

The day was clear and warm, and the tranquility of the garden invited him to sleep. For about an hour his thoughts were suspended by slumber, when he was suddenly awakened by a hasty step across the path. He looked up, and started at the sight of Raolo, in a traveling dress, covered with dust as if he had that moment returned from a long journey.

"Ha! my brave fellow," cried the marquis, "where have you been? You seem to have some of the dust of my palace about you. Are you just returned from your travels?"

"Yes, your Excellency," replied Raolo, in a sorrow-

ful tone; "I am only this moment returned, and I had much better have remained at home."

"Then your journey was voluntary," cried the marquis, more surprised than before. "Where in the world have you been?"

"Where I had much better not have been," replied he. "It is not for heads, such as mine, to think of succeeding where wiser men fail. A private soldier should never act without orders; but I intended to have taken the garrison by surprise, and I hope your excellency will forgive me."

"Forgive you," repeated the marquis, "I must first know your crime. Sit down, Raolo, and do not fear to tell me everything; you know I overlook much when the fault is acknowledged. This was a strange adventure of yours—sure you have not been at the Castle of Montillo?"

"Your excellency has guessed right," replied Raolo, in a tone of humility. "You remember your orders were to fit up the house, and furnish what was wanting till you came; so, judging from myself, I thought a lady would be absolutely necessary, and what lady so welcome as the particular one of your choice; and—"

"And so what?" cried the marquis, scarcely knowing whether to be angry or pleased. "Go on, sir."

Raolo, turning his whip in his hand, began: "I knew that your excellency had repeatedly sent letters to the old steward at the Castle of Montillo, and your never receiving any, naturally led you to conclude your lady dead; for a mistress might as well be dead as not to answer her lover. Beside, I thought all your illness arose from pining after the lady, and I resolved, in my own mind, to carry her off to your country house, and surprise you when you least expected."

"I arrived safe at the little hamlet, about a league from the castle, where I thought it best to take up my lodgings; and having there some little acquaintance, I was heartily welcomed in the cottage of honest Perez and his two very pretty daughters."

"And these two very pretty daughters have stolen thy senses," said the marquis.

"I hope not, your excellency; I have so little myself, that it would be a pity to lose them for the sake of a woman."

"Well, Perez," said I, after his first surprise was over, 'how goes all at the castle? All in the old way I suppose? The ladies are not married yet, are they?'"

"No, no," says Perez, shaking his head as if he wanted to look wise; 'Don Glum never lets anybody see them. There they are, mewed up like two nuns. Gemini, says I to myself when I think what a pity it is. Now if I were a great gentleman, I'd soon scale the castle walls and carry off these pretty charmers. Oh, by the mass, what a glorious passion old Glum would be in! It would do one's heart good to see him at half a league's distance.'

"But you suppose you were in the garden, Perez, how would you contrive—perhaps they never come there?"

"Yes, yes," replied he, 'I know they do; there's my daughter, Marta, frequently goes with curds and cream to the castle, and she has once been in the gardens, helping the ladies to gather flowers; and she says they sigh so, looks so pale, that it grieves my heart.'

"If that be the case," said I, 'you will not object to my endeavoring to speak to them. Your daughter, Marta, can carry a line from me and give it to the Lady Virginia's own hand. I can easily get over the old tottering wall near the river side, and hide myself in the green temple.' Perez would have fought shy when he found that I was in earnest; but I silenced his scruples with a double doubloon, which the scholars at Toledo used to say was the boldest figure in rhetoric. 'Is old Glum at the castle,' said I. 'He's not gone again to Grenada?'"

"There has been the devil to pay," returned Perez, grinning. "Nothing would satisfy him at his years, but he must have a young wife; so it came out what his visits to Grenada had been for."

"What do you say, Raolo?" cried the marquis. "Is Don Padilla married again?"

"No, senor," replied Raolo; "he was only going to be, but a stranger arrived just as he was leading the bride to the altar, and the match was broken off in confusion. Nobody knows who the stranger was, as he did not stay half an hour in the place; but as soon as he delivered his message, and created all the confusion he could, he mounted and rode away. Some people say it was no human being, but the ghost that frightened away the guests on the night of his marriage with Lady Zidana; but whatever, or whoever it was, Don Padilla was cheated of a wedding."

"This was all that I could learn about the matter. I lay by three or four days disguised like a peasant, never stirring from the cottage while there was as much light as to see one's nose. Well, your excellency, little Marta's day came to go to the castle, so I gave her a billet, just to say who I was, and where I would wait for the lady."

"Little Marta soon conned over her lesson, and no doubt acquitted herself very dexterously. The ladies were in a strange flutter at the unexpected news of my coming from the handsome marquis; for so little Marta told me they called your excellency; but she could not get them to promise to meet me. I fancied that I knew something about the character of the woman, and I would have laid my last suit of regimentals to a marauder, that one or both would be there."

"Accordingly, as soon as it was dark, I stole through by-paths till I came to the old wall of the garden, where it stands on the bank of the river. I found it more difficult to climb than I had supposed, and it was with some hazard I got safe into the garden. I picked out my way as well as I could, and after stumbling about a little reached the evergreen temple. I listened to hear if all was safe; for, thought I, the old don may have some suspicions, though I did not conceive how;

but, your excellency, when one's mind misgives them, they are afraid of their shadow."

"That is most true, Raolo," said the marquis; "it is thence that villains are generally cowards; but proceed."

"I hid myself amongst the rose bushes, and waited there till the clock struck twelve. How the old castle echoed with the heavy sound. I would rather be guard upon an outpost than in such a situation again; for I then recollected all the frightful stories I had heard about the castle being haunted; and now that the ladies did not appear, I wished myself safely back. Well, the half-hour chime went by, and no ladies came near me, so I began to think they had lost their curiosity; and so, thought I, I have made all this long journey for the purpose of laying here all night, and may now go back like a boy that has forgot his message. Presently I heard somebody stepping lightly along the path, and as they came near, 'Raolo! Raolo! Raolo!' says they in a low voice, which I knew directly belonged to one of the ladies, it was so soft, and so sweet, and so frightened."

"Here am I, lady," said I, jumping up, and stepping into the path."

"Oh! merciful Virgin!" cried she; 'I am wild with terror and apprehension. What brings you hither, Raolo? How does your master?'"

"Charming Virginia," ejaculated the marquis; "did she indeed inquire after me?" "No, senor," replied Raolo. "No!" cried the Marquis "did not you say so, this moment?"

"Aye, senor, but I did not say who. It was not Donna Virginia, it was Donna Almira. I made the same mistake at first myself in the garden. 'I must not stay a moment,' said Almira; 'my sister Virginia has mislaid the letter you sent and we know not where it is; she was too much flurried to come. Have you heard lately from the marquis' friend, Fernando?'"

"Yes, yes," said I, 'he was in good health and spirits. The marquis, my master, is building a new house, and I have stolen away to see if I could not steal him a wife to be mistress of it; for you know, lady, a house without a mistress is no house at all.' She laughed and inquired if I was really in earnest in my schemes, and why your excellency did not come, and how I would manage so difficult a business, and a hundred questions in a breath; just like all the rest of the ladies, thought I at the time, but I did not tell her so. I replied, that on the following night, if she and Lady Virginia would be in the garden at the same hour, I would have a boat ready on the river; and a ladder fastened on the wall; when nothing could be more easy."

"Perhaps in words, but not in fact," replied Almira. "I have run a thousand hazards to-night, and must be back in a moment."

"In one moment, lady," said I, 'you shall return; but after I have traversed so many leagues, it will be an ungracious reception my master will give me if I return alone. Surely, it would be a life of greater pleasure in Madrid than here?'"

"I confess," replied she, 'if it were not for the danger, and I could persuade Virginia, I should be willing to go. I am tired enough of this dreary, frightful old castle.'

"Are you so?" cried a voice, harsh as the crushing of thunder; 'by the deeps of hell, thou shalt not remain long within it!'"

"My father!" shrieked the terrified lady, and fell upon the steps of the temple in a swoon. Don Padillo paid no attention to his daughter, but drawing his sword, he made at me in the dark. I had no weapon but a little rapier and a brace of pistols, nor dared I use these against him in his own garden. I leaped into a thicket of evergreens, and Almira being between us, in attempting to follow, he fell over her, and I escaped without further difficulty."

"I made haste to inform Perez of this unfortunate business, and, poor fellow, he was almost as much damped as myself. Poor Marta spoiled her pretty eyes with crying, as she must no more visit at the castle. I was within an ace of blowing my brains out at this unfortunate end of my exploit; but recollecting, few as I had, I could not put them in again, I thought better of it. I quitted the cottage immediately, skulking about the forest like a fox round a hen-roost, but not a soul from the castle made their appearance the first day."

"On the second morning, one of the men-servants passed along the path towards the river with a fishing-net. 'Halloo! comrade,' cried I, 'I suppose you come from yon castle?' 'Suppose I do,' returned he, sulkily. 'I am no comrade of yours. Many a better man has that honor,' said I. 'Come, come, how goes all at the castle, Martin, and Gonzalez, and Hugo, and all the lasses?'"

"'Mighty familiar,' muttered he, staring at me. 'What's all this to you? I don't know you.'

"'You forget your old friend,' said I; 'I know you, and by the time you and I have finished this little flask of aqua vite, we shall know each other. I once lived at the castle myself: it was before your time.' 'No, did you?' cried he, gazing; 'I have not been long there.' 'I know that,' returned I, 'or you would have known me. Come, I'll help you to fish, I've a lucky hand at a haul; my father used to drag the net in the bay of Naples, and my mother cried the produce through the city.' The fellow showed his large teeth, and clapping the flask to his mouth, I completely gained his heart."

"He informed me that Donna Almira was in; that Don Padilla had given orders for a journey to Madrid in a few days, with intent to confine her in a convent, with the Lady Mother of which he was particularly acquainted."

"This intelligence was sufficient. I soon found an excuse to leave him to his fishing, and hastened to Toledo, where I left my horse. I thought very likely this story of his going to Madrid was only a feint, to conceal the true place where he meant to bury Almira; and being determined that he should not beat a march without pursuit, I waited several days in ambuscade



for him. He set out at last, well mounted and armed; I followed upon the track, keeping so far in the rear as not to be discovered. He arrived in the city yesterday afternoon, and I should have been in at night but my horse fell tired; and now, your excellency, I have only to ask your forgiveness of the blunders I have unintentionally committed."

The marquis, at the conclusion of this story, could not but admire the zeal of his servant, which had undesignedly produced so unpleasant a consequence; and as it explained to him incidents and motives which had before perplexed him, he contented himself with cautioning Raola, never to be guilty of a similar crime, it not being his place to judge what was fitting, or what was best, since all his conclusions must be drawn from the surface of things.

The Marquis of Denia, on this information, determined to postpone his visit to Count Potenza, where he ran the hazard of meeting Don Padilla; he even thought it preferable that Antonio should make his court through the medium of that nobleman, without mentioning his connection with himself. He wished indeed for an interview with Almira, that he might speak of her sister; but he knew not how to effect this with security, as he had no doubt her father would guard her with unremitting vigilance.

In the evening Antonio did not fail visiting his friend. They took a walk together on the Prada, in hopes that Almira might be there with some of the count's family. In this they were disappointed, Don Padilla and the count being in company.

"Now for a *coup de main*," said the Marquis of Denia; "we must not be seen here together or my scheme will be frustrated. Throw yourself in their way, you are acquainted with the count, engage them, and detain them for an hour; I will hasten to his palace, and see if I can procure an interview."

Antonio was charmed with this scheme, and, wishing the marquis success, in the next turn of the walk threw himself in the way of the count and Padilla, addressing himself particularly to the former, while to the latter he was reservedly polite. The common subjects of the day were discussed: when observing a lady, whose air and manner had some slight resemblance to that of Almira, he inquired the count's opinion of her; observing he thought her at a distance very much like the lady he had had the honor of seeing the preceding evening at the Duke d'Alcantara's. "I think," said he to Don Padilla, "you called her your daughter; I may be mistaken."

"I know not," returned Don Padilla, in a forbidding manner, "that I said anything about her: you have a better memory than I, marquis."

"We always remember what interests us," replied Antonio, bowing. "Had that lady not been your daughter I should have desired a further acquaintance."

"And why not as it is?" said the count. "What objection have you to her as the daughter of Don Padilla?"

"Don Padilla may perhaps object to me," said Antonio, watching his countenance. To which the count replied gayly: "That is impossible. Come, come, let me introduce the Marquis Antonio de los Velos to Don Padilla as his future son-in-law."

"Never," muttered Padilla, frowning.

"You must and shall alter your mind," said the count.

"How know you that?" returned Padilla, slowly. "Did you ever know me change the purpose I had determined? This business is settled."

"But would not surely refuse a handsome settlement for your daughter, and a gallant nobleman for your son? I should not have hesitated in giving Antonio any relation of mine, but unfortunately I have none marriageable of the female kind about me. My sister is rather too old, and has but one eye, and my daughters are not in their teens."

"What you might do is no guide to me," replied Padilla. "I have vowed that my daughter should dedicate her life to the service of Heaven, and I consider the engagement is sacred."

Antonio looked at him, as much as to say, and is Don Padilla become an observer of vows? The look was unnoticed by a man like him, whose mind was tormented by every suspicion; and from that moment, he not only felt aversion, but endeavored to penetrate into the character and connections of Antonio, yet in a way that deceived the count into a belief that his curiosity arose from a latent inclination to the connection. The count began to enumerate so many qualities and qualifications, that Antonio, from modesty, was obliged to silence him; and for the rest of the evening more general subjects were discussed.

Antonio, who was impatient to learn the success of his friend, took leave when the evening began to close, and the company to thin; and the count, on their return, recurring to their former discourse, endeavored to persuade Padilla into a change of opinion, but without effect, to the no little astonishment of Count Potenza, who began to suspect that there must be a great and a secret reason for the refusal of an offer so every way unobjectionable.

The Marquis of Denia hastened to the palace of Count Potenza. He was admitted by the servants without question, being well known, and hastened to pay his respects to the count's sister, Lady Bertha, with whom he found, as he expected, Donna Almira. She blushed at his unexpected entrance, but had sufficient presence of mind to check the particular questions he was going to address to herself by a signal for his silence. Lady Bertha being blind of one eye, they conversed at intervals by signs, the marquis urging her to allow him a moment's audience in private, which she seemed afraid to grant, as her father might suddenly return.

"Don't you think it a great pity, marquis," said Donna Bertha, "that so fine a young lady should be condemned to a cloister?"

"Not only a pity," cried the marquis, warmly, "but

a most unpardonable cruelty. I cannot think Heaven well served, by a vow against the first commands of God to man."

"You think exactly as I do," said Donna Bertha. "I was telling Don Padilla but this afternoon all that I thought on the subject, and I told him also that I thought he refined upon his barbarity, by just allowing his daughter to taste for a moment the pleasures of existence, purposely to deprive her of them forever. He replied, she would not be able to pray from her heart against the temptations of life, if she had not some little knowledge of what they were."

"His motive is now very clear," said the marquis, looking at Almira; "but how can it be frustrated?"

"Make her your wife," said Lady Bertha, rising up abruptly; "I shall leave you to settle the terms." On which, without further ceremony, she quitted the room, having no doubt observed that the marquis and Almira were much better acquainted than they seemed willing should be known.

"This is beyond my hopes, my charming cousin," cried the marquis, starting up and saluting her. "Last night I dared not make a single inquiry lest I should betray myself. Now, tell me all that I can have interest in knowing. Tell me what were the consequences of the blunders of Raola. Tell me, if Virginia yet remembers me?"

"She has not forgot you," replied Almira, "however painful it may be to remember those whom we can never hope to see. But you say nothing about Fernando, marquis! What has become of your friend?"

"I know not," replied the marquis; "I have not heard from him for many months. But I have another friend equally dear, who does justice to your merits; let him supply to you, as he does to me, the friend we have lost; let him even be more, for you know, my dear cousin, Fernando was not what you wished him to be."

"I understand you," said Almira, blushing and sighing; "I suppose you mean that young man who rescued me from the flames last night. I acknowledge that gratitude obliges me to esteem him. There was something in his manner that affected me, probably from my ignorance of the world; and I confess I could have wished him for a brother, to share our confinement in the castle. But now, Albert, that is over; I am condemned to that state for which I am most unfit. If to me the dreariness of the Castle of Montillo was insufferable, how much more so will be the routine of a convent, and that convent the Dominican Nuns?"

"Don Padilla is not cruel by halves!" exclaimed the marquis. "But is there no means to rescue you from this fate?"

"Alas! no. My father has sworn by the most fearful oaths. His temper has, if possible, been a thousand times more gloomy. He is, at times, I do think, actually mad. My sister trembles for her life, and I know not, when I am away, what will become of her."

"I swear," cried the marquis, glowing with resentment; "I swear, by everything sacred, I will protect her." Then taking her hand, he lowered his voice, and said: "Let my friend, Antonio de los Velos, also protect you. He will fly at a word to lay himself, his life, and his fortune at your feet."

"Hold," said Almira; "do not speak thus to me. You rend my heart. Ah, marquis, what sacrifice would I not make to avoid a greater. Fernando!"

"Cannot be yours," said the marquis, tenderly. "Dearest Almira, you would not wish the hand of a man who has no heart to dispose of, if he even lives."

"I know, I know," cried she, passionately; "your friend always treated me with indifference. I see too plainly I must take the detested veil."

The marquis smiled. "Think better of it," said he; "a handsome young nobleman, with a considerable revenue, must outweigh a rosary and a crucifix. A little time will probably bring you to my way of reasoning, and, at worst, you have a year's probation before you perform the vows. In twelve months, my cousin, how many greater changes will happen than the alteration of a lady's mind. Now let us speak of your sister."

He was interrupted by the return of the count's sister, who significantly inquired if Almira was to be a nun.

"I fear it, indeed," replied the marquis, "unless you can persuade her there are more charms in a nobleman's palace than a convent."

"I shall scarcely have time," replied she, "before the return of my brother; it is already near nine o'clock."

"So late?" cried the marquis, starting up; "I have already taken two hours instead of one."

The marquis hastened away, admiring on what contrivance Antonio could have fallen to hold them so late. He had not been gone many minutes when the count and Don Padilla returned.

"We have met with a lover for you in our ramble," said the count to Almira (Don Padilla being engaged at the window); "but I know not how we shall bring this business to bear."

"Don't give yourself any concern," replied his sister. "We have had one lover here ourselves, so you may abandon yours to a forlorn hope."

"May I know who that is?" inquired the count. "We must barter for an exchange of secrets at least," answered she; "but Almira, have I your permission?"

"Nay," returned Almira in a low voice, and a look of alarmed apprehension, "you have gone too far to require it, but the marquis is no lover of mine, indeed."

"Why that, indeed?" said the count, laughing. "I can answer for the marquis that he is—he told me so himself this very evening. He even made proposals to your father, and it is not a quarter of an hour since he left us."

Donna Bertha could scarce refrain from laughing out. "You would not," said she, "persuade me I have neither

eyes nor ears; the Marquis de Denia has been with us more than two hours, and it is but this moment!"

"The Marquis de Denia!" cried Don Padilla, turning round in anger. "Has the Marquis de Denia dared?—but how came you, Almira—were you not aware of my detestation, my utter and inextinguishable hatred? Death and fury! Am I to be thwarted at every turn by this wretch? But I will some day have revenge, Count, I beg your pardon: my passions are sometimes too much for my discretion. Almira, I will be obeyed—prepare this very night for the convent."

"Hold a moment," cried the count, "this is a very foolish business. The marquis came as a visitor to me, your daughter denies his being a lover of hers and my sister declares what she said was in raillery."

"I know better, I know better," repeated the enraged Padilla, as he stalked about the room with a distorted countenance. "That wretch crosses me at every turn, but it is my own fault: I am a fool, a child thus to trifle."

Amidst these exclamations, he suddenly recollected their impolicy, and shrinking into his usual gloominess, he spent the rest of the evening in sullen silence, firmly determined that on the next day his daughter should begin her novitiate.

Antonio hastened from the Prada to meet his friend, when their mutual success was related and future plans discussed, without any positive arrangement. "I am going to-night," said Antonio, "to treat her with a serenade. I have provided music, and the words are from an old Spanish romance. I have a tolerable voice, and will sing them to a guitar if you will accompany me."

To this the marquis made no objection; but having need of repose, he lay down for an hour to rest. He was awakened by his impatient friend about eleven o'clock, who, having provided an excellent band of musicians, Raola, Philip, Antonio's servant, attended them, well armed, nothing being more common than encounters in the streets from the jealousy or mistakes of lovers.

They were not long in reaching the palace of the Count Potenza, where, having taken their station, the musicians preluded with a symphony, which ceasing, Antonio sung the following air, accompanied by his friend.

#### SERENADE.

Art thou awake, or art thou sleeping?

Love may attack thee, Lady Fair;

Were the heart so safe in keeping.

As to elude the secret snare?

Cupid, a wanton, slyly enters,

Sometimes the eye, sometimes the ear!

Boldly to gilded domes he ventures,

Wrapped in the garb of bashful fear.

#### SYMPHONY.

Rise thee, and hear me, Lady Fair.

Then, dearest maid, be not disdainful,

That power the proudest once must feel.

List to a heart who fond complaining,

Love's brightest passion would reveal.

Then again close thine eyes in slumbers—

Should Love perchance invade thy breast,

Music attuned to softest numbers,

Shall soothe thy mind to sweetest rest.

#### SYMPHONY.

Rise thee, and hear me, Lady Fair.

After an interval of silence they again performed the same air; but Almira not appearing at the lattice, they were obliged to retire without the satisfaction of knowing she had heard them, though of that there could be little doubt. Their company was too numerous to dread any common attack, and they returned in safety to the palace of the Marquis of Denia.

Antonio, early the following day, sent a present of the finest fruit Madrid could produce, accompanied with a note of respectful compliments to Padilla: but he was deaf alike to interest, to reason, and to nature.

#### CHAPTER XII.

Thrice blessed they that master so their blood,  
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage!  
But earthlier happy is the rose distilled,  
Than that which withering on the virgin thorn  
Grows, lives and dies in single blessedness.

Shakespeare.

EARLY in the morning Don Padilla conducted his daughter to the Convent of Dominican Nuns, with a severe charge to the lady mother of the foundation, that she should not permit any stranger to see, much less hold correspondence with, his daughter. It was his knowledge of her severe and inflexible disposition which caused him to select her house from that of many others in more eligible situations. He knew the mother, St. Agatha, would measure out to those around her that portion she herself had partaken; having been dragged from the arms of a favored lover in the prime of her life, and buried within those barren and unpeopled walls; in place of learning from them to commiserate the woes of others, from a wrong turn in her disposition, arose an inveterate hatred against any who presumed to aspire to greater pleasures than she had experienced, and she considered the exercise of her power as a just retaliation upon fortune.

Under such a superior, Almira could expect no indulgence; and when the gate, which barred her from the world, closed upon her, she wished again to have had the old castle to ramble over, with her sister Virginia, to share in her conversation, and to plan some little scheme of innocent amusement. The narrow, gloomy cloisters were even more solitary than the heavy gothic galleries of the Castle of Montillo, and the emblem of



religion inspired more reverential awe than the relics of martial grandeur.

Almira was of that disposition which wished for some companion to share the pleasures of friendship; her heart was too gay for those solitary scenes of endless monotony, and the night which had first introduced her to an assembly, obliterated, in a few moments, the reflection of what had brought her to Madrid. This fairy scene was as transient as it was bright; she felt, as her father had intended, in greater force the misery of her situation.

She had placed her affections, at first acquaintance with her cousin Fernando, not from any motive of comparative preference, but because he had been the only young man with whom she had been in any way familiar; and his coolness and indifference perhaps augmented the flame.

In this habitation of piety, she looked round in vain for a sister open and candid as herself; for a bosom that might share her confidence in the purity of female love. All here were cold and repulsive. Music, indeed, warbled on their lips, but charity had no abode in their hearts. Since long since committed, rankled with corrosive violence on minds which no other occupation could divert from reflection. Regret and unmeaning repentance soured the disposition of those who had too late discovered that they had chosen wrong; and few, very few, tasted the intoxicating cup of enthusiastic religion, which enabled them to look with indifference upon the contrasting gayety of the world that surrounded them.

Almira secluded herself as much as she could with propriety in her own cell; where she could not avoid repining at the harshness of her lot; and in place of breathing petitions to Heaven for grace to adopt and become the habit, the daily uttered wishes at the foot of the altar that Fernando, or even the Marquis de los Velos, might find means to rescue her. The routine of religious ceremony was but a partial amusement, and could not relieve her mind from its weight of overbearing sadness. It even augmented her serious reflections, and she found herself fast approaching to that apathy which arises from universal disgust.

Amongst the sisterhood Almira could distinguish no friend, but amongst the boarders was a young lady, whose name was Saphira, whose innocent conversation and lively remarks engaged her attention; and though her years, being scarcely sixteen, admitted not of unbounded confidence, yet her company was amusement and pleasure.

They read together, but it was the dry, uninviting morality of the fathers. They sung together, but it was hymns and religious airs. They rambled together in the garden, but it was in a garden where every object reminded them of mortality, and every step might be supposed to pass over the mouldering bones of some departed friend. Melancholy yews and solemn cypresses formed the alleys; no flower of variegated hue, or brilliant appearance, was admitted into this sanctuary; and whichever way the eye turned, sadness and silence seemed to sit brooding upon death. The termination of the walk opened not upon a beautiful vista, or capacious temple; a shade of impenetrable twilight mingled them in confusion, as though the glorious beams of the sun were too gay for admission where mistaken piety had placed her abode.

This garden, dreary as it was, was preferable to the interior of the building, where shade spreads its gloom at noonday and pale figures in long white robes, with black veils and black girdles, gliding through the galleries and cloisters like inhabitants of a spiritual world. Almira discovered with surprise that, even in these abodes of supposed tranquility, where the passions of the heart should have been charmed into slumber, discord and ambition had extended their influences, and occupied in the bosoms of too many the place of devotion.

The abbess was in the decline of life, and the senior sisters each had a view to the succession, which created parties and cabals within the walls, as inveterate, perhaps, as those of the different colors in ancient history. Almira was yet too insignificant to be courted by either any further than for her opinion, whether Mother Urbana was not more preferable than Mother Isola? Such questions, which to her inspired no interest and to which she was wholly indifferent, she declined with delicacy, observing that it was not for her, who had so recently entered the society, to form a judgment of her superiors. Saphira was equally uninterested; but even her youthful observations pointed against the folly and eagerness of woman, and these women far advanced in life, aspiring to the transient shadow of power when it was almost an equal chance whether themselves might not first become inhabitants of the grave.

"There must be something sweet in the possession of power," said Almira one day to her young hearer, "or why should these old ladies grasp at its possession with so much violence. For my part I should like to be the queen of some flowery island, guarded round with high walls, that might defend it alike from enemies and the attacks of the ocean. I would have all my subjects beautiful and peaceful, and I would dispense to them every blessing in my power to bestow. I would have fine palaces, fine gardens, elegant entertainments of music and dancing, and the whole kingdoms should be a little paradise of enchantment."

"But who," said Saphira, innocently, "would you have to build all your palaces, perform on your music, or work in your kitchen?"

"That is true," replied Almira, "nothing can be performed without labor, and where there is labor there will be discontent, and where there is no labor there will be heart-burning and jealousy about insignificant trifles, such as gangrenes and real pleasure of contemplation within these walls; walls which would otherwise hold out an asylum much to be prized by those who have been unfortunate, who have lost all their friends, or who are weary of the world."

"And I think," said Saphira, "one must be all these before they can admire and love these gloomy little chambers and these moping nuns. For my part, when I am obliged to go along these dark galleries by myself, I am almost afraid some specter will start upon me from the obscurity, for one can neither see before or behind: it is exactly like a fog of twilight mist."

Almira, in company with this young friend, endeavored to soften down the rigors of solitude; but she could not suppress the repinings of her heart. Fernando's indifference accounted for his long silence; but the same excuse did not exculpate the Marquis de los Velos; he who pretended to be deeply enamored, could yet suffer days and weeks to pass away without so much as one visit, or the smallest token of remembrance. She was ignorant of the restriction placed upon her, which prevented her receiving any message, visitor, or letter; and she knew not the ineffectual devices of Antonio to gain admission. Her mind began to be dimmed by the gloom around it, and hopeless dejection saddened her thoughts.

Her little companion, who, till the death of her parents, had been habituated to all the splendor and vivacity of the world, was even more affected than Almira by the contrast. Her mind insensibly imbibed all the terrors which strict religious discipline, when united with bigotry, is calculated to inspire. Her sprightly temper lost its tone; her mind became the prey of fictitious horrors, and all her thoughts turned upon futurity. The friendly discourses of Almira, by degrees became irksome, and, like a vitiated taste, nothing could give her pleasure that did not lead to the general subject of her conversation. For whole days she would ramble in the darkest recesses of the garden, and she soon became so changed, that neither her sentiments nor her person could have been known for the same, after a confinement of less than three months. Her mind had not had sufficient experience to preserve its tone; it sunk beneath the awful ceremonies and melancholy duties of a convent. Her health decayed, and it was with extreme affliction Almira beheld this lovely girl sinking fast into the grave.

She endeavored to divert her mind with more lively prospects; she attended her with an affectionate interest which deprived herself of rest, and she mourned over her as a blighted flower withering before its perfections were fully disclosed.

It is impossible to be perpetually in any company without imbibing, insensibly, the sentiments of that company, whether they be vicious or whether they be good; so Almira found that the constant habit of attending the innocent Saphira arrested and fixed her own mind upon the awful mysteries of religion, which, added to the daily lectures they attended, were calculated to fill her mind with indifference for life, and incline it to adopt the manners, and become less repugnant to the idea of taking the irrevocable vow.

She attended with more fervor the services of the church; when she quitted the couch of sickness, she felt not so much aversion to her lot, and there were times when she even thought that if Saphira could remain as her companion, she should not feel much reluctance at the renouncing forever the vanities of a transient life. Of this there were no hopes, for the sun never arose without witnessing some alternative or decay in her friend's person, and she looked forward with painful anxiety to the short period which should terminate her transient existence upon earth.

Saphira was conscious of her approaching dissolution, and beheld it with pleasure. "My dear friend," said she, one evening, as Almira sat by the side of her bed, "wherefore do you weep? I feel something within me that says we shall soon meet again. Do you not remember the toys you so admired when a baby, the fondness you professed for them? And did you not think you could never part from them? But as you grew up, how insignificant they became in your eyes, and you then threw them away as worthless trifles. Just so the soul learns to despise this world, as it gains a knowledge of the future."

Saphira shortly declined beyond the powers of medicine, and Almira, while she beheld her, frequently shed tears, reflecting that but a very little time would go over them ere those polished limbs would become flaccid, ere those eyes would cease to convey impressions of intelligence; and that voice, harmonious as music, be silent forever. Oh, death! cried she, as she sat on the little coarse bed in the narrow, dark chamber; "Oh, remorseless death! thou tear'st asunder all the connections of love, family and friendship. Thou solemn ambassador of futurity, no bribe can turn thee from thy purpose, no consideration stay thine hand."

A deep sigh caught her attention; she started, and looked fearfully around. Saphira had fallen into a feverish slumber, and her sighs arose more from bodily oppression than the thoughts of her mind. For two days she continued to linger, every hour apparently at the last extremity; and on the third she breathed her last in the arms of her weeping friend.

Almira was inconsolable at this event, though so long expected. She threw herself upon the corpse of the departed maid, and gave way to an agony of tears which relieved her heart. This was the first friend she had ever lost by death, and she had difficulty to believe, though reason confirmed it, that she was, indeed, gone forever. It seemed so incredible that, without any external violence or struggle, the principal of existence should depart its abode, and she gazed with earnest anxiety expecting that those lips might again, if but for once more, pronounce some endearing sentence of affection.

At last she unwillingly withdrew, being unable to attend the last offices of friendship; and throwing herself upon a chair in her own little chamber, she remained, for a long time, in a reverie of grief which clouded her understanding, and, for a time, rendered life indifferent.

A young lady, whose name was Valedia, had been

received as boarder the day preceding this melancholy event. She was related to many noble families; the liveliness of her temper engaged the hearts of her friends, and it was with surprise they saw her adopt a resolution so unfit for the sociability of her manners. The affection Almira bore towards the dying saint was amongst the first subjects of conversation, and she possessed an earnest desire to become acquainted with a character which she conceived to resemble her own. She refrained breaking in upon the sacredness of grief; but when the first transports of passionate affection had subsided, she introduced herself to the cell of Almira, whose mind could not resist the tone of her conversation, and from that moment an attraction acted mutually between them. She seemed to Almira as sent from heaven at a moment when she most required a confidant and friend, and the one listened while the other related the merits of the departed Saphira.

That young lady had been a general favorite in the convent; her birth was high, her connections great, and her youth deprived jealousy of its sting. All the nuns lamented her loss, and celebrated her virtues as a saint, preparing to solemnize her obsequies in a manner at once grand and impressive.

Almira and Valedia prepared to attend this ceremony.

On the fourth night after her death the sisters, all clad in white, with black crape veils down to the ground, and black girdles, repaired to the church of the convent, which was illuminated with tapers. The altar was hung with black, and the vaults were open into the body of the church. The novices, dressed in white, bore the coffin with the body of their sister, and the Father Confessor chanted before them the solemn service.

The monks who attended the duties of the convent were habited in black, and ranged themselves on each side beneath the steps of the altar. When the whole were seated, a solemn mass was performed for the repose of the dead.

Almira was too much affected to bear an active part, and sat down on one side, leaning upon the bosom of Valedia. From the deep grief which seized her mind at the solemnity around her, she was aroused to thoughts above earthly things by the performance of a grand Anthem and Requiem. It was opened by a mournful dirge upon the organ, when the monks and nuns alternately, or in chorus, performed the following.

#### REQUIEM:

SOLO.—By a Nun, accompanied with a mournful symphony.

Vain are our cares, vain are our fears,  
Or hoping of to-morrow;  
Man through this transient term of years,  
Is still the child of sorrow.

The wav'ring breath of human life,  
As burns awhile the taper,  
So shines amidst want, and pain, and strife,  
Then vanishes in vapor.

Say, what is man, that he should be  
By Heaven's Most High regarded?  
Or how, from vice and sin set free,  
With future life rewarded?

#### RESPONSE.

SOLO.—By a Monk.

He whom for human nature died,  
In mercy will forgive;  
And those who in His power confide,  
Shall in His glory live.

#### CHORUS.

Then raise the lofty organ's note,  
Peal on peal resounding high;  
Strains that up to heav'n may float,  
And wake the concord of the sky.  
Then louder, louder, louder sing,  
Hosannas to our God and King.

#### SOLO.

Ye gates cerulean backwards fly,  
Ye everlasting doors give way,  
She comes—a daughter of the sky,  
And strains celestial around her play.

#### CHANT TO THE VIRGIN.

Receive, O Virgin, Mother of Mankind,  
This sainted daughter to thy holy rest;  
To thee her spotless spirit is consigned,  
To thee she comes a meek and peaceful guest.

On earth awhile she bloom'd a fragrant flower;  
No roughen'd thought disturb'd her tranquil mind;  
But soon elapsed of life her fading hour,  
She fled and left mortality behind.

Ye sister angels, bending down to hear,  
The song of glory, which we feebly raise,  
Benignant smile, as with a list'ning ear,  
Ye catch the tribute of our partial praise.

#### TRIO.

No more will we on earth repine,  
A sister mild, a friend sincere;  
In worlds of glory shall she shine,  
Where crimes no'er move the secret to

Angelic spirits glad prepare,  
Robes of white and spotless shade,  
On untextured pinions bear  
The spirit of this happy maid.



## RECITATIVE.

To Paradisa bow'rs forever green,  
Where palm-trees blooming cool the fervid ray;  
And blazing glory, through the sacred scene,  
Sheds splendid grandeur in eternal day.

There saints and seraphs, near the living streams  
Of flowing fountains, ever mild and pure:  
In smiling visions, or in grateful themes,  
Praise him, who was, and ever shall endure.

## GRAND CHORUS.

Loud, loud hallelujahs, ascending on high,  
Archangels and seraphs, enraptured, reply  
In chorus, still rising, that never knows end;  
Loud, loud hallelujahs forever ascend.

The winding up of the last chorus was inexpressibly grand. The body of harmony seemed to fill every part of the extensive building, and Almira forgot, in the rapture of sound, and the ideas of eternal glory it inspired, all the particular griefs which hung upon her soul. She had given wings to her imagination, and trod in fancy unimpeded through the starry firmament, mingling with bright aerial spirits in the ineffable pleasure of supernatural delight.

From the delirium of soul, she gradually recovered as the sounds died away, and the notes ceased to vibrate along the aisles of the church; but it enabled her to attend with calmness to the last offices to be performed. The whole company descended the gloomy stairs into the vaults, the organ continuing a slow movement, till the tones were wholly lost in the silence of the tombs.

The dim tapers sparkled through the gloom, scarcely bringing to light the rows of mouldering coffins which hung with yellow clammy dews, while from the arched roof distilled petrificative drops. The timid nuns cast many a fearful glance upon this last abode, where each knew some future hour would bring themselves; and they secretly seemed to say: "There, or there, must I lay; there shall I moulder into dust, and there remain till the final consummation of all things."

The coffin was placed by the side of many others, and left a vacancy for one upon the top of it. "There," said Almira to Valedia, "there upon the house of my friend, let me be placed." She shuddered at the dismal prospect. "No one can tell," said she, "how soon I may be there, left in total darkness, and lost to self-consciousness."

As the sad procession returned, the nuns cast many a fearful glance of inquiry behind them, pale and trembling at the reflected shadows which crept along the wall, and stretched over the coffins. Each stole silently to their cell to meditate on the things they had witnessed; and for that night the machinations of jealousy and ambition were unattended.

Almira bade her new friend good-night, and placed her lamp at the foot of her crucifix, where an hour-glass stood that was now run out. She turned it, and sat down in a chair opposite, gazing upon the sand as it ran, till her mind was bewildered in melancholy fancies. The last grain fell, and she was again turning the glass when she heard, or fancied she heard, soft and solemn music steal upon her ear through the stillness of the night. She listened. The sound swelled clearly along the passing air.

"It is then no fancy," thought she; "it is not the embodied vibration of the anthem returning upon my ear; it is as a symphony of spirits in the air; and who knows but my Saphira's greeting me with the music of her companions." In a little time the sounds melted into air, sinking into a tone that could scarcely be caught, when a voice clearly and softly pronounced the name of Almira. She started up, and opened the door into the corridor, but no one was near. With a sensation of awe she closed it again, and solemnly placed herself before the crucifix. Again the voice whispered Almira, and she looked round with straining eyes. The lamp before the crucifix glimmered and died away, and all around remained dark and profoundly silent. Again the music arose, and swelled in numbers so sweet and so divine, that fear was charmed into pleasure. A gradual light imperceptibly shone in the chamber; increasing into brightness, and a form of smiling and lovely beauty by degrees became visible. Streaming robes of azure and white played around the form in alternate foldings, spangled with shining stars like various gems. A golden crown of beamy fire mingled with the waving air, and the countenance expressed more than mortal beauty and benignity.

Almira was entranced with astonishment and delight. Under this angelic figuration it was sometime before she recollected the features of her recent friend; but how much more lovely were they tinged with all the nobility of celestial perfection. She gazed upon her without the power of utterance, and a tear of delight swam in her eye.

Saphira motioned with her hand. "My friend," said she, with a smiling countenance, "such as I am you will quickly be. Prepare, Almira; nine days and you will go hence." She waved her hand in token of friendship, and smiling, gradually faded from my sight. The music floated in the air, the celestial radiance mingled with the darkness, and in a few minutes the lamp again burned bright, and the sounds were wholly lost to the ear.

"Do I dream," said Almira to herself, "or is this vision real? Can it be true that unembodied spirits are ever permitted to appear as a consultation or warning to their friends? but to me. How unworthy am I of so high an honor." The solemn mandate which had accompanied this appearance, impressed her mind with

a belief, and she shuddered to think that with all her imperfections unrepented, and her wishes unweaned, she should so soon be summoned from the things of life. She had already been near three months in the convent, months which had passed away with the tedium of years. She received no letters from her sister, nor any visits from her father; and indeed she was ignorant whether he had returned to the castle, or whether he remained in Madrid.

The more Almira mused upon the prediction of her fate, the less able was she to determine upon its purport. The shortness of the time appeared to her to preclude accident, or the decay of her health. What accident indeed could happen to her with impenetrable walls? She was sometimes ready to interpret in a literal sense the words—*You will go hence*; but it was beyond her hope that she should be freed from the convent. She forbore mentioning to Valedia the singular appearance she had witnessed.

The conversation of Valedia was happily adapted to relieve the mind from sadness. It was by turns, lively or serious, and formed itself to the disposition of the hour. Her attachment to Almira seemed every moment to increase, and she frequently hinted a wish of mutual confidence.

"Is not mine," said she, the second evening after the funeral of Saphira, "a singular fate? You will wonder when I tell you this place is at once my aversion and my choice."

"That is singular," replied Almira; "to me it appeared at first as a prison, but custom has so far reconciled me that I find it possible to live. My thoughts, it is true, perpetually recur to my sister Virginia, and the gay liberties of my early youth. But why, my dear, should you make this place the choice if you were free to will otherwise?"

"Do you know I am an impostor?" said Valedia, with a smile; "I have pretended ignorance to you, but I am well acquainted with your connections, from the mouth of my dear cousin, Antonio de los Velos. You start, my dear, but be assured I am not dangerous. I know also the Marquis de Denia, and the adventure which introduced him to your acquaintance."

Almira, with a hesitating voice, inquired if she knew also the marquis's friend, Fernando de Coello?

Valedia sighed deeply, and gazed upon Almira with an earnestness which seemed to seek into her thoughts. "Yes, Almira," said she, "I think—I know I may trust you. Without confidence there can be no friendship; and though a lover will divide the greatest attachments, yet when that lover is no more, the knowledge of a mutual admiration only cements affection."

"You speak to me in enigmas," said Almira.

"Then I will explain myself," returned Valedia, gently laying her hand upon Almira's arm. "You have been in love, my dear, so have I; but the object of our choice is forever lost to us both, and I have here resolved to mourn away my days."

"Is Fernando dead?" murmured Almira; then breaking into tears they sunk for some time into each other's arms. "He is dead," said Almira, recovering, "I have no longer reason to desire to live: I will take the vows with you."

"Not so," replied Valedia. "You have many reasons to desire a better fortune. The Marquis de los Velos is deeply in love with you. He is an elegant and accomplished nobleman, and such as few of our sex would refuse. I know, Almira, that your love of Fernando can be little more than inclination cherished by solitude, and thinking constantly on one object. He was in your company but a very few days, while with me he passed the years of his youth. The father of Antonio was his guardian after the death of his own parents, and I may say I loved him from the earliest hour of my memory. To an impartial eye, De los Velos is preferable: and when you remember he will liberate you from this prison, place you in the most elegant circles of Madrid, and render you mistress of his actions, you will be either less or more than woman to refuse him."

"Were such an offer to be made you, would you accept it?" said Almira.

"I think that I would, under the same circumstances," answered Valedia.

"But, my dear," returned Almira, wiping the tears from her eyes, "the duty I owe to my father is sacred; were I to fly from this place without his consent, I should fear some terrible judgment would overtake me."

"I see," said Valedia, with a smile, "you are already initiated into the superstitions of this place; but ask yourself if there are no bounds to this authority you dread? Can a parent have a right to imprison or destroy their offspring from wanton whim or caprice? Surely not; and as surely it is a duty incumbent on yourself to fly from such abuse of power."

Discourses like these, on repetition, gained upon the mind of Almira, which was naturally inclined to pleasure, though her late connection with Saphira had much decreased the desires of her heart. Valedia was artful, though virtuous. She had a wish to serve her cousin Antonio, and a latent desire of suppressing a rival, should Fernando ever return, which she herself distantly hoped. She painted to Almira all the gay scenes of life in which she had herself figured, and suggested so many schemes of happiness within her grasp, that Almira again began to repine at solitude, and reflect upon the offers of Antonio.

On the following day Valedia was called to the gate, a privilege Almira was wholly denied. In about half an hour she returned, with a letter in her bosom, which she presented to Almira, saying, with a smile—"It was Antonio, as I suspected. It was with difficulty I took charge of this billet; for had I been detected by that prying old abbess, I must never have gone to the gate again. I was afraid she would think my cousin was making love to me, he spoke so earnest and tenderly.

Seriously, my friend, if you reject him, I shall not think you a woman."

"But how can I accept the hand of a man, for whom I have no higher regard than esteem?" said Almira, looking at the seal on the letter.

"That is his business," replied Valedia, laughing; "break that charm, and read the contents of the magic scroll."

The letter breathed the most ardent sentiments of love, and earnestly pressed for a favorable reply, in the name of her sister and the Marquis of Denia. He said many things to assure her he required no more than the strictest duty might approve, and strongly contrasted the prospects of felicity they might enjoy with the cold and barren employments of a monastery, to which her father condemned her for life.

These arguments could not but fall with weight upon Almira. She reflected that her cousin had never returned her attentions; he was now lost forever; and she hesitated about the answer she should return. "Let it be a consenting negative," said Valedia. "If he should change his mind and fancy me, it would then be too late for you to repent."

"I should witness that event with pleasure," replied Almira. "If you have any wish, I will give him a final denial; for to tell you the inmost feeling of my heart, I find a sort of lingering desire after gayer scenes and worldly pleasures, yet so mingled with indifference, that I compel myself reluctantly to accept them. I am unable to express the compound sensation that I feel; something seems to hang upon my spirits, as if I was not my own agent; and I may compare myself to a vessel in a stream, without rudder, sail, or oar, which, with the returning tide, feels an equal impulse, and follows at last the most powerful external force."

"You draw your distinctions too finely, to be very happy," said Valedia. "In this life we ought never to feel too acutely either pleasure or pain, and yet for myself, I never could arrive at the dull medium so necessary if we would glide easily through the world; but we are now growing melancholy; when our prospects are brighter we will plan an answer to this letter, and trust the event to that superior power which controls all things."

## CHAPTER XIII.

Better be with the dead,  
Than on the tortures of the mind to lie  
In restless ecstasy.

ANTONIO, on the evening following the serenade, paid a visit to the Count Potenza, in hopes of being admitted into the company of Almira; when, by a display of his talents and connections, he might pique the pride of Don Padilla, and stimulate his interests into those concessions which friendship could not obtain. Great, therefore, was his surprise, when he arrived in the evening, to learn Almira was already become the inmate of a convent; and he could not in the first moment of his anger refrain expressions of severe resentment.

Padilla enjoyed his confusion, and answered his reproaches with defiance; indeed, so malicious were his retorts, that Antonio could easily perceive a chief trait in his character to be, a delight in the misery of others, and vowing in his own mind to surmount every opposing obstacle, he hastened to his friend the Marquis of Denia, to give utterance to the suggestions of his resentment. He found the marquis in a melancholy disposition, seated in his library, with his head leaning upon his hand. He started at the entrance of Antonio. "You come," said he, "very opportunely to relieve me from the tortures of reflection. What it is that pursues me, I know not, but I am miserable. Sit down, my friend, and let us see if we can develop this mystery. This morning, early, I awoke, and dressing myself, went down into my garden to enjoy the beauties of the cool hours. I was delighted with the chirping of the birds in the orange and almond groves, and sat down on a bank of flowers to listen to them. In a few minutes I heard a rustle among the laurels, and raising my eyes, beheld solemnly advancing towards me, a tall person, wrapped up to the eyes in a black cloak, instantly recalling to my mind the person who had accosted me in the church at Calatrava. I started up to call for assistance, or the better to defend myself; when, guessing my design, he motioned with his hand for my silence. Only about half the upper part of his face was visible, but the gleam of his eye was not to be mistaken."

"He stood a moment gazing upon me with the malice of a fiend; when drawing from his cloak a letter sealed with black, I looked upon the signet, and found it my father's seal. I started in confusion at the sight; I gazed upon the writing, and recollected the traces of his hand. My impatience and amazement were too great for me to notice, and taking advantage of my absence of mind, this strange messenger had departed; and when I again looked up, he seemed to me to have vanished. The letter was written with my father's hand, and commanded me not to undertake the journey I had meditated, but to hasten instantly to the house on the banks of the Tagus, and wait his permission for my departure. I caused the gardens to be searched when I recovered from my first surprise; but no person was to be found, and, to this moment, I cannot conjecture what or who is this messenger."

"Are you certain the letter is in the handwriting of your late father?" said Antonio; "and is it not possible you may be deceived by a resemblance, and the whole be a repetition of those infamous schemes which you so narrowly escaped on your way to Toledo?"

"I am not without suspicion," replied Albert. "The disguised person, who brought me the letter, I suspect is no other than Jacques: for surely, there can be no doubt it was he who so artfully deceived me in the



church. The writing might be a forgery; but the signet is what I always carry about me, and which it would be no easy matter to counterfeit. How, also, could Padilla, or his agents, know my intended journey to the Castle of Montillo, which was planned so secretly that none of my domestics, except Raolo, can suspect it?"

"Are you certain of his fidelity? Bribery is very powerful," said Antonio.

"I would pledge my life upon his silence," replied the marquis, who seemed willingly to incline to the supernatural side of the question. "My curiosity impels me to comply with the order of the letter; for I am well aware that I shall have no tranquility till I can discover who or what it is that is forever undermining my repose. I will, in future, never stir without arms, and at the next interview, if my sinews do not become paralyzed, I will be certain whether I have to deal with a body or spirit."

"Your love is not such as mine," replied Antonio. "I would first rescue my mistress, and then seek into those things; but since you are going to quit Madrid, tell me, if you can, how I may free Almira from the convent, and by uniting her fate to mine, bid defiance to all the schemes of Padilla."

The Marquis of Denia advised him to bribe some of the monks that attended the convent, and as Don Padilla would, in a day or two, return to his castle, to be wary of discovering his design before his departure. Antonio having settled a correspondence with his friend, left him, giving orders to Raolo to prepare for their journey to his country seat. He was too impatient to await the absence of Padilla, presenting himself the same day at the gate, requesting to speak to Almira. All his address and ingenuity were not sufficient to soften the heart of the superior. She reproached him at once with the design of interrupting the devotions of a young mind, and stirring up the pure and holy sanctuary, of which she was governess, the profane desires of worldly pleasures; dismissing him after a tedious harangue upon her own virtues and inflexible honor, with declaring that Almira never would be permitted the converse of any living person, outside the walls, except her own father, much less a young man like him who only prowled about her fold, for the wicked purpose of carrying away one of her innocent flock.

Antonio saw that he might as well think of moving to pity the bars that prevented his entrance, as the long since cold and unfeeling heart of the abbess, and he turned gloomily away to plan some other design.

For several days he made every possible inquiry concerning those who served the convent with various articles. He applied to several of them to convey a letter; but some pleaded their conscience, and the rest declared, at once, that they should run the hazard not only of losing their employ, but their characters, which, in such a case, would ruin them for life. Antonio next had recourse to one of the monks. He represented to him the injustice of the retaining Almira, an unwilling prisoner. He set before him the greatness of his own passion; and, above all, represented that his rank and connections would be certain to promote him in the church, and provide him a dignity he could never hope otherwise to attain.

The latter argument had considerable influence, and after several professions of regard, the monk promised him a final answer in a few days, till which he requested him to wait with patience. This interval, in the eyes of the ardent Antonio, appeared an age; but necessity required his acquiescence, and to amuse his thoughts he regularly visited the convent church, but the nuns never appeared before the curtain. He examined the situation of the building, to see if it were not possible, in case of extreme urgency, to scale the frowning walls, and carry away by force the sacred charge. One part of the garden wall adjoined to several low houses, whose tenants were of the poorer sort, and the street it opened upon was obscure and narrow. This appeared the most vulnerable part of the fortress, and, overjoyed at his discovery, he hastened away, lest the presence of a man of his figure, in such a place, might create suspicion.

He returned repeatedly to reconnoiter, under various disguises, every time more convinced of the practicability of his design, if he be seconded from within.

At the appointed time he waited upon the monk; but his reception was cold, and his denial firm. The monk now pleaded the imperious necessity of his duty, observing that, on cool reflection, the Marquis de los Velos would think a man ill qualified for those dignities he had the power to bestow, if he made the first step to attainment, upon the prostrate person of his sacred vows; and that if he had not given his decided negative at first, it was from a zeal which he had to serve so deserving a nobleman.

Antonio easily perceived that the mother Agatha had been consulted, many of the monk's phrases being the same as she herself had made use of to him. He had now to begin anew the mode of his attack. He attempted to convey a letter through the medium of some little presents from the Count Potenza; but though the presents were delivered, the suspicion of the abbess always detected the concealed billet, and Almira remained ignorant that she owed those trifles to the attention of Antonio.

The agitation which perpetual hope and perpetual disappointment created in the mind of Antonio, caused him to neglect his friend; and though he wondered the marquis never visited Madrid, he was too much engaged to give it particular attention. He had always some new scheme to set on foot, or some new sonnet to write; for, that Almira never saw those tender effusions, he was ignorant, and as they never returned, he was sometimes inclined to hope that some, at least, met her eye. Thus upwards of two months passed away, and when he calmly reflected, he found himself as near as when he first set out, and ordering his horses suddenly, he resolved to hasten to the Marquis de De-

nia, and engage his return, that he might assist him with his counsel and personal action.

His servants were, some of them, dispatched to get the horses ready, while others prepared his baggage. He sat in an indolent, impatient posture, looking upon the passengers in the street, and thinking of Almira, when his cousin Valedia ran into the room. Observing the disorder around him, she inquired if he was upon the point of going a journey, or only touched in his head, as the wildness of his countenance seemed to indicate.

"You are very gay, cousin," said Antonio; "but I have no spirit, at present, to enjoy your talent for humor."

"And why so, cousin?" said she, laughing. "I can easily guess your disease; nothing more than a love fit. Let me tell you, love makes you would-be-wise men fools; of which I see sufficient symptoms infallible to pronounce on your disorder."

"But, though you may prognosticate ever so well," replied Antonio, "you want the skill to cure me; and so, my good Valedia, leave me."

"Leave a man in love alone to himself!" returned she, "that would be an ill method of cure indeed; I should expect you had hanged or drowned yourself, or something worse."

"And what worse could happen?"

"Why that you had scampered away on a journey, and forgot the cause of your pain."

"You are heart-whole, my pretty friend," said Antonio, "or you would not jest thus. Tell me, were you ever in love? Seriously. Yes, seriously."

"Then, seriously, I have; but it was a great while ago," Valedia sighed.

"I will believe you now," said Antonio, taking her hand. "Come, my sweet friend, let us be mutual confidants: love is as talkative as age."

"And as foolish as dotage," said Valedia. "But I have a question to ask you; is it long since you heard from your friend, Fernando?"

"That is a question," replied Antonio, "I know not justly how to answer. I have had no recent information, and must acknowledge I begin to fear common report for once speaks truth. But, surely, you are not in love with him?"

"Why not?" replied Valedia. "There can be no harm, now my secret has been long kept. Now, cousin, tell me if I know the lady of your choice!"

"I believe you do not, and what is worse, never will."

"How so," cried she, in surprise; "I hope she too is not dead."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Antonio; "but though not dead, she is buried from the world and from me."

"She is in a convent then, I suppose?" said Valedia.

"You are right; but so rigorously confined that none of her friends are allowed any communication, and all my attempts to get even a sight are in vain."

Antonio then related the outlines of his love for Almira, and the various unsuccessful stratagems he had employed to procure admission to her presence.

When he ceased speaking, Valedia said, with a smile of satisfaction: "What will you give me, if I procure you this desired interview? Nay, more, if I bring Almira herself to your arms!"

"I will give you," cried he, pressing her hands to his lips, "anything you can require short of my heart, and acknowledge that the invention of your sex exceeds the boasted stratagems of ours."

"That will be acknowledging what all the world allows," replied Valedia. "But it is not said, we are always as disinterested as cunning; and there are not many examples of so fair a damsel as I, running hazard to promote the love of a cavalier young as you. I will, therefore, be content with the praise due to the act."

"Then now let us come to the design," said Antonio, who had little expectation her proposal was serious; and his surprise was great when she thus began to explain her intention.

"I have weighed in my own mind the several attempts you have made, and the chief difficulty appears to me to gain admission into the convent. To overcome this I will become a boarder, which will enable me to carry on my correspondence. I will endeavor to acquire the friendship of Almira, and to promote your interests in her favor. What will be more easy than the accomplishment of this design? We can arrange our schemes unsuspected; my quality will give me respect, and, I have no doubt, we shall shortly effect the escape of your mistress."

Antonio was enraptured at this plan, which, with discretion, seemed incapable of failure; and embracing his cousin, he committed to her care the promotion of his suit. His intended journey was countermanded; and while Valedia went to prepare for her removal, and to engage a lady of rank to speak to the abbess about her admission, he sat down to write to the marquis his new, and, as he considered, infallible scheme.

The intention of Valedia was no surprise to her friends, who had observed the frequent fits of melancholy which possessed her when she thought upon the faded prospects of her younger years, when she had fondly hung upon the words of Fernando, and secretly imbibed the most subtle of human passions. The recommendation of her aunt was not to be rejected, and St. Agatha admitted her as a boarder, with no little pride at the distinction such a choice conferred upon her house. How easily Valedia gained the confidence of Almira has already been seen, and the effects of her constant discourses were not to be doubted.

Antonio conveyed, through the hands of his cousin, repeated letters, and invitations the most flattering to every feeling of the human heart. He was not long content with the reception of her answers; he requested she should meet him on the second night from the date of his letter, at the bottom of the garden, where it was

next to impossible they could be interrupted, and where he hoped to convince her personally of his sincerity and intentions.

It was not without many reflections, and much entreaty from Valedia, that she consented, with a reluctant heart, to this clandestine proceeding; but it was absolutely necessary if she intended ever to quit the convent. The strange and fearful prediction of Saphira ever stood before her, alarming her mind with doubt and timidity. She repeated again and again the engagement, and the foreboding of evil sunk her into deep dejection.

In vain she attempted to reason away the oppression of her spirits, and to impute the whole to the high tone of her imagination and feverish spirits. She numbered up the days which were passed, and she started with dread when she remembered that the appointed night was the ninth since the prediction of the angelic vision.

"Surely," said she, "some mysterious fate hangs over me, and the moments advance which are to carry me to the arms of my heavenly friend. I must not, cannot, meet this Antonio. I will excuse myself, and wait in my cell to the fatal hour. Alas! were I to be overtaken by death in the very act of outraging my duty, what could excuse my remissness and folly?"

Such were the reasonings of Almira, whose agitated mind deprived her of rest, and enervated her frame with that languor of indifference which prefers ease to opposition.

Valedia, who knew not her friend's secret reasons for apprehending the event of the approaching night, wondered at the fears she expressed, endeavoring to raise her spirits, and to keep her firm to the appointment.

"If," said Almira, "I am to meet my fate on the ensuing night; if it is true that I shall go hence, it is indifferent whether I remain in my room or the garden."

Valedia did not comprehend the full meaning of this sentence, and replied, "I hope Antonio will have prepared the means of conveying you hence."

"Perhaps," said Almira, with a mournful sigh, "the conveyance will be satisfactory to none of us."

Antonio, who knew not whether he should again have the opportunity of a personal interview, resolved in his own mind that this should be decisive, if he could possibly prevail on Almira to seize the moment before them. He had arranged his plan, having a conveyance in waiting within the area of his own palace, giving out that he should early the next day pay a visit to the Marquis of Denia. He feared making any preparations near the convent, lest he should be counteracted by some spy belonging to Padilla.

Antonio was returning to his palace about noon of the eventful day. He walked slowly along the street meditating on his project, when he was suddenly accosted by the Marquis of Denia, covered with dust, and in extreme agitation. His countenance wore all the marks of surprise, grief, horror and perturbation. He walked extremely fast, and hurrying Antonio along, led him through the by-streets to his palace, preserving silence the whole way to any questions suggested by the wondering Antonio.

The moment the marquis had shut the door of his library, he threw himself into a chair, exclaiming: "Pity me, my friend; you see before you this day one of the most miserable of men, and that by means which should have made him most happy. Wretch that I am, I have murdered my own hopes, and blasted forever the good fortune Heaven had designed me. Oh! cried he, starting up, "I shall go raving mad; my hands have been steeped in the blood of Virginia, and perhaps at this instant she breathes her last. Oh, Heavens, Antonio! (and the tears burst from his eyes) that I should live to lament such an action; that by my hands, the fairest beauty of Nature's forming, should be thus destroyed."

"Be calm, my dear friend," said De los Velos, when the marquis paused. "What do you lead me to think from these incoherent expressions? What is it you say?"

"That I have murdered Virginia, the darling of my heart, the object of my soul's doating."

"Impossible!" cried Antonio; "you surely dream?"

"No, no, no," cried the marquis, wildly. "Oh, that it were a dream! Many horrible dreams I have had but this reality is worse than them all—look at this crimson sword, stained with the purest blood that ever flowed from the heart of innocence. Oh! great Heaven, pity me!"

The marquis dropped his sword upon the ground, and clasped his hands together in an agony of grief. Antonio beheld stains of blood upon the glittering blade, and shuddered as he took it up. "What strange occurrence could have impelled you to such an action," said he; "and where did it take place? Have you been to rescue her from the castle, and was this done in defending her from her father?"

"No," replied the marquis, gloomily, and starting at the horrible remembrance; "it was beneath my own roof; but now I have not a moment to tell you how. I left her pale and faint, life wavering on her lips. I have ridden post for a surgeon—I expect one every moment, when I must return. I must be calm, Antonio, to warn you against some mischief. I have been at your palace to find you, and I met the Count Potenza."

"He informs me that Don Padilla arrived at his house last night; he has dispatched a hundred spies to bring him information of our proceedings. I expect a visit; but now—now I am prepared for anything that can happen to myself. But take care—your steps are watched, and your visits round the convent a public talk. Don Padilla is not a man to trifle. I have ten thousand things to say, and not one moment to say them. If you will enter my chaise with the surgeon, who I see coming, I will explain myself more."

"Excuse me, I entreat," said Antonio, "great as is my curiosity, and much as is my astonishment and



grief at what you tell me, I would not for worlds be absent this night from Madrid."

"Beware," said the marquis, "that your presence does not cost you dear, and remember me."

The surgeon was now announced—and embracing Antonio, the Marquis of Denia entered the chaise, which drove off with all the speed the horses could exert, leaving his friend wrapped in wonder and doubt, which no reasoning could dispel or resolve. What dreadful accident had happened to Virginia he could not guess; and what way he should avoid the vigilance of Don Padilla he had yet to determine.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

Hail! I come

To answer thy best pleasure; be't to fly,  
To swim, to dive into the fire; to ride  
On the curl'd clouds; to thy strong bidding task,  
Ariel, and all his qualities.—*Tempest.*

WHEN the Marquis of Denia quitted Madrid, at the reception of that singular command, which he fancied himself necessitated to obey, he took up his residence at his country seat, resolved to await an interview which he expected from this mischievous character in disguise, whom he strongly suspected to be Jacques; though, how a letter of his father's, bearing, indeed, no date, should have come into his hands, he was unable to determine, and wished to unravel.

To bar against secret assassination, he had the lower apartments of his house secured. He blocked up the doors adjoining the rooms he himself inhabited, leaving only two narrow passages open, and never went abroad unarmed or unattended by Raolo, though it were only into his own gardens. Thus he fancied he had provided against any surprise, or human effort.

One week passed away and he received no further interruption. On the second, his mind was disturbed by an incident, which, though in itself within the bounds of natural events, yet being so timid, struck him as another effort of the same malice which had destroyed his peace, by loading his mind with fanciful horrors. The gardens before his house were adorned with innumerable flowers, and the fruits were ripening upon the branches. He had remarked in the evening, as he walked with Raolo, the singular beauty displayed by the vegetable creation; and the next morning when he looked abroad, all that beauty was withered, and the fruit dried up upon the branches, as by a blast from a noxious gale.

The weather was not remarkably hot, and the fire-wind was never known to blow in this part of Spain; and while the marquis wondered at so singular an event, he silently imputed it to the same power which had overturned near one-quarter of the building by a sudden whirlwind.

The servants beheld the blight as an omen of some great misfortune; and it was even whispered amongst them that their lord would soon be snatched away by death, which would thus destroy him before his time, as the blasted fruits of his garden.

A month passed away, and the marquis began to find rest from his troubled fancy. His library attracted the chief of his attention, and he sought in two most opposite studies to prepare himself for any fate that might await him.

He read over all the books of devotion which attracted him, to confirm himself in reliance upon Providence; and he perused several books of magic, to discover, if possible, how far infernal spirits were permitted to act upon men; being in his own mind convinced, from the whole chain of events he had been engaged in from his leaving the Castle of Montillo, that such was his unfortunate situation.

He was one day musing on these subjects, till his mind was ready to start from the picture itself portrayed; it was noon, and the servants were taking their repose. The day was hot, and the marquis sat dressed in a loose gown in his study when the door slowly opened, without any notice, as from a servant.

The marquis arose at the unexpected opening of the door, and advanced towards it, but he started back with sudden dismay at beholding, for the third time, the same figure of a man wrapped in a long old Spanish black cloak, which enveloped the whole person but the upper part of a dark and murderous countenance.

He had never beheld this being without remembering the similarity of the appearance to the phantom he had seen in his dream, when he seemed separated from Virginia forever, and precipitated down from the sky; and though, in his cool moments, he always believed it no other than the assassin Jacques, yet it never stood before him by surprise, but he, for the moment, trembled with fear.

His eyes were fiery and wild, his brows were knit together, and he sternly gazed upon the marquis without uttering a word. In vain the marquis thought upon his pistols, which lay upon a side-table; he had not even power to speak. "Spirits," thought the marquis, "are said to love the mantle of night, but this comes upon me at noonday, when the heats are at the highest, wrapped in the shade of his own garments, and dark alone in his own countenance."

The figure pointed to the open door, and the marquis ventured to point to a chair, making signs that the business might as well be finished there as elsewhere.

The stranger with a motion quick as lightning, drew a dagger from the foldings of his cloak, and waving it in the air, again sternly made a sign that he would be obeyed, and with a rapid stride pointed the dagger within a foot of the marquis's throat.

Whether this being were human or no, the marquis had neither power nor means of resistance. He might be murdered with the same facility in his own chamber, as in a more secluded place; and he resolved in his mind no longer to shrink from whatever fate he had to encounter. Once resolved, the firmness of his native

courage strengthened his joints, and making a sign that he would obey, the stranger moved forward to the door, followed by the marquis, within the reach of the arm, which held up the dagger ready to plunge it in his breast.

In this situation they proceeded along the back stairs, into that range of apartments the late marquis had occupied, and which his son forbore to reside in from the melancholy reflections they excited. They entered at last a room on the ground floor, which had been the study, and was surrounded with curious cabinets, containing papers written by the old marquis. In the center of the floor Albert perceived a trap-door open, presenting a deep chasm, down which a pair of stairs led into some dark labyrinth or dungeon, of which he never had the slightest knowledge till this moment.

Astonished at this singular circumstance, he looked upon his guide with increasing apprehension; yet he feared to betray his want of confidence, when a motion might in a moment number him with the dead. The stranger began to descend the gulf. The marquis cast his eyes down the gloomy cavity, into which he shuddered to enter, turning pale; when the fearful guide, frowning fiercely, and shaking his dagger, glanced upon him a look of vengeance.

The dreadful darkness of this dismal place struck him with the deepest horror as he descended the steps, every moment expecting to plunge into an unfathomable depth, from which he was only assured by the heavy and solemn paces of his unpitied guide. About thirty steps brought them to a firm landing, and the faint gleam of a distant torch cast a dismal shade, without serving to illumine or chase the surrounding darkness.

The marquis continued to follow, over ground which was soft, like new-turned mould beneath his feet, every moment expecting to be terrified by some tale of murder, transfixed by some frightful appearance, or stretched upon the ground by some unseen blow of the uplifted dagger.

The stranger moved forward without uttering a sound, for their feet made no noise that echo could return; everything around was profoundly and fearfully still; the marquis scarce dared breathe, in painful expectation of what or where would be the termination of this scene.

Being arrived within a few paces of the torch, which was stuck into the ground, he saw newly removed, an opening of about two feet deep, in form of a grave, a spade standing beside it. The strange guide suddenly paused.

"Now," cried he, in a voice almost choking with the exultation of demoniacal triumph, "now, Albert de Denia, is thy last moment come. Thou canst not escape. Thou art deep in the bowels of the earth, and when thou hast finished thy grave, thou shalt die."

The stranger let fall the foldings of the garment which enveloped his face; the glare of the red torch fell upon it, and presented to the marquis the savage countenance and murderous lineaments of Jacques, as he appeared on the night when he entered his chamber with the lamp and dagger in the Castle of Montillo.

The marquis shuddered with surprise; he repented, but he repented too late, having followed into such a place alone and unarmed; for at that hour of the day, and in that situation of fancied security, he had not even his sword; and he found himself wholly in the power of a wretch, who had the double motive of revenge and personal security to urge him to murder. He read all these thoughts in his countenance, as he stood with his arm extended in the air, and smiled at once contempt and pleasure. He made a motion with his arm as if going to strike, and the marquis shrunk back half a pace. The black cloak, which was loosely fastened, partly fell back, and the marquis, in place of the growing skeleton he had seen in his dream, beheld a corslet of steel, which caution had provided against unforeseen resistance. The marquis now gave himself up as certainly lost. The villain read his power, and with a voice of raillery said:

"Who didst thou take me for, marquis, a spirit or a wandering ghost? Thou wilt find my arm something stronger than either, I trust. Now thy curiosity is satisfied. It was I who met thee in the church of Calatrava; it was I who delivered thee a forged letter to conduct you into my snare; and now you are caught, nor shall all the fiends in hell free thee from this arm. Thinkest thou, marquis, that grave is deep enough?"

"Is it as deep," cried the marquis, resolute from desperation, "is it as deep, thou murderer, as that in which you placed the body of Count Fernandez?"

The eyes of Jacques became livid with rage. "Wretch," cried he, "take that spade, dig your own grave, and when it is finished I will pour thy blood into it, and cover thee up to rot. Dare you disobey, this dagger shall find a grave in your carcass."

Every moment's delay was precious; the marquis had no means of resistance, and taking the spade began to dig, while Jacques, uttering all the suggestions of his bloody wit, stood over with the dagger. The marquis had time for a moment's reflection, and that supplied him with a desperate resolution.

The earth he turned up was soft, and he threw it on one side, Jacques standing on the other, with his face rather inclined over the grave, the better to strike in case the marquis should attempt to escape. In this situation the marquis, with a sudden turn of his hand, threw a spade full of earth into the face of Jacques, which confounded the ruffian for a moment, and allowed Albert time to leap on the opposite side of the grave, where the torch stood burning.

The marquis caught up the torch, and darting forward at Jacques, set his black garment in a flame before he had time to parry off the unexpected attack. With the sharp edge of his dagger Jacques cut the torch in two at one stroke, the flaming piece falling into the grave, flashing with partial gleams from the

bottom, and emitting a volume of smoke, as from the mouth of a fiery furnace.

"Behold the grave," cried the marquis, "in which one of us is to lay. Prepare, wretch, to account for all thy crimes." Jacques appeared as a demon of destruction, fighting in flames and smoke. His upper garment burned quickly away, but his armor defended his body. He made furiously at the marquis, who, with difficulty, could ward off his attack with the spade, against the blows of which his corslet was a complete shield.

The marquis slackened his attack, in order to watch some opportunity when he might take advantage of an unguarded attitude and waiting till another flash of the torch gave them light for a moment, he darted so well-aimed a blow upon the head of his powerful antagonist, that he staggered and fell upon the edge of the grave. The marquis followed his success, and before he had power to rise, gave him so many blows over the head, notwithstanding all the efforts of Jacques to ward them with his dagger, that he was deprived of sensation.

The marquis prepared to roll him into the grave, with intent to fill up the earth upon him, when he was startled by a light motion behind him; and looking up, beheld a figure, which, in his agitated state of mind attracted all his attention, and riveted him to the earth.

A female form moved across the subterranean vault, habited in Moorish robes, with a black veil descending to her feet. Around her head, and amongst her hair, a band of red flame seemed to play, serving at once to render her person visible, and light her steps through those dreary mansions of melancholy silence; at the same time that it added to the hideousness of her appearance by its uncertain motion.

In her right hand she held a silver spear, the top of which was pointed with a green, yet clear light, and in her left hand she carried a human skull. Her arms to the shoulders, and her legs to the knees were without cover, and she appeared as a fiend from the infernal realms of vengeance.

The marquis was near sinking upon the ground as he gazed upon this figure. He supported himself, leaning upon the spade, while she moved slowly before him. "Possibly," thought he, "this is some wandering spirit of darkness; or an enchantress, who in these dreary vaults, performs the tremendous rites of her incantation."

Her Moorish garb first gave rise to this suggestion, no people studying the art of magic with more avidity; and as this idea gained ground in his mind, his fears became less, and his curiosity stronger. "I will witness," thought he, "this horrid act, that I may be convinced if its powers are real, or its performance so impious as we are taught to believe."

The figure moved onward with a majestic motion. The marquis cautiously followed till the turning of the vaults led into a spacious dome, in appearance the excavation of a hill.

The eye in vain endeavored to penetrate the thick and almost tangible darkness; the sides of this subterranean temple being earth of different strata, which emitting no reflection, the fancy was led to wander through a boundless void.

The marquis stood still, resting against the side near the entrance, awaiting the event, and totally forgetful of his late encounter.

The enchantress advanced nearly to the center, where standing still, she placed the skull upon the ground, and stepping upon it with her bare feet she stood for some moments without motion, as if muttering an invocation; but her black veil concealed her countenance. She then extended the point of the spear which was tipped with flame, describing a circle upon the earth; from whence arose, as she traced, a line of pale green flame, emitting a singular smell, but without smoke, till it encompassed her round.

With her left hand she threw back her veil, exhibiting a pale and livid complexion, marked with a strong trait of frenzy, to which her darting eye added increase of wildness.

"Surely," thought the marquis, "I have seen those features. It must be the same that I beheld in the chamber at the Castle of Montillo, and this is a continuation of the horrors that then chilled my blood." His reflections were suspended in painful expectation of what he had yet to witness. The enchantress standing upon the skull began to turn and throw herself into every gesture madness might have dictated. She seemed in the eyes of the marquis as one of the ancient furies.

The mystic dance being ended, she stepped down on the ground, and turning the hollow of the skull, she took from her girdle a phial, the contents of which she poured into a cavity, and touching it with the point of a burning spear, a strong and bright flame arose amidst clouds of snow-colored smoke, that circled in festoons over her head, and formed an undulating canopy around her. She read her incantations from a little book, which she took from her breast, and which was written with human blood upon parchment made of a murderer's skin, while the flame and clouds continued to arise, and a strong, yet unpleasant perfume pervaded the place.

The bright clouds waved in spiral wreaths to the top of the dome, where, meeting resistance, they turned, drooping to the ground in forms that delighted the eye, and settling upon the outside of the circle, completely enveloped the enchantress in a temple of transparent and dazzling brightness; while the increasing flame within appeared as a body of compressed fire, in the midst of which, wrapped in gloomy frenzy, stood the authoress of the scene.

The marquis remained without daring to move. A burning heat pervaded every part around him, and a sense of suffocation arose in his breast; but yet he was unwilling to quit so strange a sight without awaiting the crisis, while his lips trembled, incapable of utter-



ing a sound, and he pronounced mentally a prayer to Heaven, whose protection he felt was most needful in this tremendous situation.

The enchantress continued to utter her infamous spells, when suddenly she ceased, being, as it were, transfixed with some distant sight of horror. Her eyes were stretched to behold it: her features were extended and convulsed, and seen, as she was, surrounded with a green colored flame, her ghastly visage became a picture of corrupted death.

"He comes! He comes!" screamed she, in a voice of the utmost terror. "He comes in anger!"

The arched festoons of moving vapors dissolved in a shower of blood; and hollow sounds echoed along the distant avenues, and flashes of purple and sapphire-colored light darted round every part of the dome. A strong wind of sulphurous vapor almost annihilated respiration, and howled with dismal moaning as it rushed through the cavern. The marquis would have raised his hand to his mouth to prevent suffocation, but his muscles refused to bend, and he found it impossible to make either motion or sound.

Repeated thunders, like a thousand artillery, reverberated and shook the bowels of the earth; a loud strain of military music broke the air, and a figure of gigantic stature entered the dome. His height was superior to the sons of men, and his face declared him a being of immortal form. He leaned upon a rod of burning steel, a girdle of fire burned round his waist, and his feet were clothed in glowing brass. His wings, which he partly extended, glittered in all the shadings of an ever-varying rainbow, and on his head was a black helmet, over which waved a plume of condensed clouds, adding to that pride and impious arrogance which sat upon and shaded every feature of a countenance which neither mortal pen nor mortal fancy can describe.

His rapid eye shot, like the glancing lightning, a thousand ways at once, with a penetration that pierced through the solid earth, and scanned, at once, the secrets of nature. The marquis endeavored to turn himself from the keen gaze of this immortal being, but he was riveted to the spot. His whole frame seemed disorganized and dissolving before his frown, and he could only utter a short ejaculation to Heaven before his nerves relaxed, and he sunk senseless upon the ground.

When returning life again awakened his senses, and strength slowly braced his frame, he found himself involved in total darkness, and it was long before he retraced upon his memory all the chain of incidents which had conducted him thither. It was with difficulty he could persuade himself that he had not been in a frightful dream; but the deep and impervious darkness convinced him that he yet had to find the clew to this subterranean labyrinth, of which, till this adventure, he had never had the smallest knowledge, and now was almost tempted to believe the fabrication of magic.

He arose with difficulty, and groping his way along the sides of the passages, he hoped to find again the stair down which he had descended, if indeed it had any real existence; for so much had the scenes he had witnessed shaken the powers of his reason, that he ceased to pursue the dictates of cool reflection.

His weakness allowed him to proceed but slowly, and he trembled lest in this incapacitated state he might be again attacked, it being more than probable that Jacques had recovered, and might, at that moment be lurking in the obscure recesses, or laying wait for him in the narrow passages, where the lowness of the hanging earth obliged him to stoop. Slowly he proceeded, now resting to recover strength, or pausing, when fancy created the alarm.

Almost despairing of ever being able to free himself from this entangled and dark abode he wandered for more than an hour, till he was nearly exhausted, when he perceived a faint light at a distance, like the glimmer of a star through a fog. Fear and hope agitated his breast as he cautiously advanced, till he could perceive a female stooping to the ground, and seemingly administering to some person in distress.

The marquis made no doubt but it was the sorceress, endeavoring to recall to life the assassin Jacques, and a damp sweat gathered on his brow at again beholding that fiend in female form, to whose incantations he imputed all the mischances which had befallen himself.

How to escape unseen he knew not, but to be discovered he knew would be certain destruction; and he wondered in his own mind how she had overlooked him and suffered him to escape when his senses were wrapped in oblivion.

To remain where he was equalled the danger of proceeding, and he hoped through the dim obscurity he might escape unseen. The hope was vain. The sorceress immediately remarked his presence; starting from the side of the grave, she pursued him; for at her first motion the marquis exerted his speed towards the stairs, whose situation were direct from this spot.

"Thinkest thou to escape me?" cried she, as she advanced; "though thou hast slipped from the arms of a man, though thou hast escaped all my charms and broken the slumber of a powerful spell, in the name of Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, I arrest thy flight and scatter blindness in thy path."

The marquis, at these powerful words, found his feet suddenly grow to the earth, and clouds of confusion swim before his sight; yet his senses remained, and his tongue was free. He had heard the words of the enchantress, and, without other design than reply, he cried aloud: "Wretch, slave to the Prince of Wickedness, thy power cannot equal the Almighty; and him whom thou tremblest to name, will not suffer that any of His creatures, who fear Him, should perish by thy damning arts. In His name I charge thee to restore me." The marquis crossed himself, and bowed his head toward the ground. The influence of the incantation ceased, the film passed away from his sight, and

he found himself standing alone at the foot of the stairs up which he hastened into his late father's library, where he almost swooned away with the excess of joy that he again breathed an untainted air, and beheld the glorious beams of the rising sun.

The marquis retired immediately to bed after a slight refreshment; but his sleep was broken by unconnected and strange images, wandering through quagmires, or sticking between closing rocks in subterraneous passages. Thus he received no refreshment from sleep, and when he awoke he found a feverish heat and universal lassitude hanging over him. He saw no termination to that train of vexations which, for the last twelve months, had interrupted all happiness; and while Jacques and this enchantress had power to harass him, he could never expect to be the certain master of an hour.

The marquis wished to confide in his servant, Raolo, the discovery he had made of this extensive cavern, and explore with him its secret recesses; but he was unwilling to enter into a long and unnecessary explanation, and he sighed for his friend Fernando, whose fate appeared to him but too certain.

Antonio was too much occupied with his own passion to leave Madrid, and the marquis resolved, as soon as his health in any degree recovered, to hasten to that city, and aid him in attaining the liberty of Almdra.

The mystery of his father's letter he could explain, when so free an access could be had to some duplicate signet. Who the female could be he had no conception. Strange suspicions filled his mind as he remembered the incidents that had happened in the Castle of Montillo, and he had little doubt but she was the same whom his friend Fernando had seen rise from a grave in the vaults of the chapel. Her business seemed with the dead in the bowels of the earth, and her character appeared to him too terrible to be human.

Near a fortnight elapsed before the marquis was sufficiently recovered to leave his room, and he proposed, in a few days, to go to Madrid. Meanwhile, to prevent another surprise, he gave Raolo in charge to guard against the entrance of strangers, and to fly instantly to his library when he should ring his bell.

A fixed melancholy again settled upon his mind, and his thoughts were of the most gloomy shading. The evening of a very fine day set in with a heavy storm, and the marquis, who now expected ill in every change of the elements, went to his window to gaze upon the lowering sky, not without some apprehension that another side of his house might be scattered over the grounds.

He remained a long time at the window, listening to the awful rolling of the thunder, and watching the sporting of the subtle lightning, till his mind was almost overpowered with its own thoughts. He wondered Raolo had not called him to supper, when he saw by his watch it was near eleven o'clock, and, taking a taper in his hand, he advanced to the supper-room.

He opened the door; a female sprang forward to meet him, her dress in confusion. The taper fell from his hand as the idea of the enchantress flashed upon him, and her action confirming him that she had a design to assassinate him, he unsheathed his sword in a moment, and thrusting forward the point, the stranger ran upon it, and murmuring out his name, fell, bleeding, upon the floor.

His arm was arrested, but too late, by his servant, Raolo; and old Gonzalez, uttering cries of despair, ran to raise the fallen Virginia. The marquis gazed a moment, too much confounded at first to understand all the horrors of the deed. He gazed eagerly upon her face as it became pale, and, clasping his hands in agony, remained, for a time, wholly speechless. Recovering from this stupor, he heaved a sigh. "Is it then," cried he, "no deception? Have I murdered thee, my Virginia? Oh, heaven! why was this?"

He sank down beside her, and pressing her in his arms, endeavored to recover her from the insensibility which bound up her senses.

The old man tore his white locks in despair, and not knowing clearly how the accident had happened, his complaint pierced the heart of the marquis with the acutest distress.

Raolo was the only person who retained any presence of mind; he called for the housekeeper, Dame Bertha, and ran himself for a restorative.

Virginia after a time opened her eyes; those heavenly eyes, on which the marquis would have gazed with rapture, now seemed to reproach him with the most barbarous cruelty, and it was more from not recollecting that he had the power to die, than that life was sacred, that he did not sheathe the fatal sword in his own heart.

His grief was too deep to find utterance in words, and holding her hand in his, and gazing upon her pale yet lovely features, he supported her while the housekeeper cut away part of her dress, and examined the wound, which was slighter than the effusion of blood had given occasion to fear.

A faint gleam of hope dawned upon the soul of the marquis. He who had sat almost motionless as a statue, lest the smallest stir might warn the spirit of his beloved to take its flight, now recovered all the energy which dwelt within him. He directed the maids to carry her carefully to bed, and Dame Bertha, who had from her youth been accustomed to all the accidents of a large family, and possibly knew as much as half the physicians in Madrid, compounded a cooling draught, and desired that she should not be disturbed till the arrival of the surgeon.

The marquis remained near till he supposed the first shock of her spirits had subsided, and fearing Raolo would not fly with the same diligence as himself, he sat out before day for Madrid totally forgetful of the danger he himself might run, and totally regardless of all things but the recovery of Virginia.

At Madrid, while he was seeking the surgeon and

Antonio, accident threw him in the way of Count Pottenza, who in a hurried manner related the arrival of Don Padilla, and the means he had employed to trace the designs of himself and Antonio. He readily imputed the presence of Padilla to the absence of his daughter, with the old steward; but, however much he himself was surprised, he had not had a moment's leisure to inquire into the reasons that could have conducted to that flight.

## CHAPTER XV.

"'Twas but a dream,  
But then so terrible, it shakes my soul:  
Cold drops of sweat hang on my trembling flesh;  
My blood grows chilly, and I freeze with horror.  
Oh, tyrant conscience! how dost thou afflict me?  
When I look back 'tis terrible retreating;  
I cannot bear the thought, nor dare repent;  
I am but a man, and Fate do thou dispose of me."  
Shakespeare.

WHEN the marquis and the surgeon arrived they found Virginia resigned to the event, whatever that might be; a tone of mind advantageous to a dangerous operation, and from which the surgeon augured the best effects. The wound, on probing, was found slight in comparison with the fears of the marquis, and he attended her bedside with the assiduity of a man whose existence depended on the event. His attentions could not but be grateful to the suffering maid, and she was in her mind almost ready to thank the accident which called forth so much tenderness and unequivocal regard.

So sweet a train of thought stole over her mind that her spirits were tranquilized into a gentle slumber, and she appeared free from fever. The marquis hailed the happy omen with delight, and taking Gonzalez into another apartment, he inquired the motives that had induced their flight from the Castle of Montillo.

"The reasons," answered the old man, "are most strange and most singular; they almost baffle my poor old head, and turn me giddy with the recollection. You doubtless remember, señor, all the fearful omens relating to the castle. Ah! many a foul deed has blackened its black walls. All those noises and warnings are not for nothing. I have often thought old Padilla carried his character written upon his brows."

"Well, my dear Gonzalez," said the marquis, "tell me in method what you have to say. I fear Virginia may awake."

"I have a very long tale to tell," replied he, "and I fear my way may seem tedious. You had better first, if you please, order a log of wood on the fire. I always think a cheerful blaze gives me courage, and dispels gloomy apprehension."

The marquis complied, and the old man began.

"Your excellency must remember your visit to the picture room, when Don Padilla returned so unexpectedly. You must also remember the interruption we met with when I was relating to you the story of his excellency's two wives. Well, whoever or whatever it was that overheard us, it was not long before it reached Don Padilla. I must own I thought my life not very secure under his roof; he never spoke to me about any business; and if I happened to meet him, he scowled at me as though he would have sunk me with a frown. I was ignorant, señor, till after the escape of your servant, Raolo, that he had made any attempt to speak to the ladies; but Padilla imputed to me the design which was discovered by his finding the letter on the toilet of Lady Almira; for, ever since the arrival of that stranger, whom nobody knew, and who forbade his marriage at the very altar, he had been more than curious in visiting the ladies' apartments, as though he suspected them of a design to betray him."

"Do you know who that stranger was?" said the marquis. "Did you see him, or hear his business?"

"I saw him, and I partly heard him, but not clearly from the confusion. I must go back in my tale to tell you, that Don Padilla took his journey to Grenada this year earlier than usual. When he had been gone about a week, I received a letter ordering me to see the best rooms put in order, and the little chapel arranged, for that he was going to bring down a lady, who, from motives of delicacy, wished the ceremony to be private. Indeed, poor soul, she rather wished it should not be at all; but the Count D'Osorio, her father, was gained by the riches of Padilla, and she was obliged to obey."

"Well, a long train of servants attended the count and his daughter, and our castle was full of guests. I did not wonder in my own mind at the determination of Don Padilla, because I knew his greatest desire was for an heir, and I knew, also, that he was not to be restrained when his passions were on fire. The morning of the ceremony came. Lady Altamira appeared amidst her maids, dressed in all the elegance of fancy; jewels sparkled in her hair; her figure was really fine, and her flowing robe increased the majesty of her motions."

"Virginia was dressed in the Castilian habit, of a light azure, mounted with silver, and her sister Almira, in a light pink. They looked more pleased than the bride, as they walked up the aisle; and when the rays of the painted window fell upon the face of Virginia, I thought I never beheld her more lovely. She reminded me of the picture of her mother that evening, when, if you remember, the sinking sun shed its beams on her countenance."

The marquis sighed deeply, and Gonzalez continued his description of the dresses and order of procession, unattended to, till the marquis was roused by the words which followed. "The company had already taken their places before the altar, and the priest had begun the ceremony, when we all turned round on a sudden noise at the door like the struggles of a person for entrance."



"I fixed my eyes on Don Padilla, whose countenance changed as if his mind already foreboded what would ensue. The priest stood without speaking, and the whole company turned around to the door, where a stranger, forcing his way through the servants, advanced slowly up the chapel.

"He wore a mask upon his face; he was dressed in the Moorish habit. In his left hand he held a letter, and his right hand was placed upon the hilt of his sword.

"I expected a repetition of a similar scene to that I had witnessed on the nuptials of Lady Zidana; and if I could penetrate the thoughts of others they were not much different. The proud stranger made no obeisance to the company, but advancing, before the altar, presented Don Padilla the letter he held in his left hand.

"When Don Padilla fixed his eyes upon the writing, his countenance became of a livid hue, and his teeth shivered with perturbation. He was some time before he could collect a reply. 'If,' said he, 'the earth can yield up its inhabitants, and the sea give back its dead, then may this be.'

"The stranger slowly raised his mask. Don Padilla gazed upon him with a fearful frown and clapping his hand upon his sword, stood in a posture of defense. The stranger smiled contemptuously, and closing down his mask, solemnly walked out of the chapel and mounting a coursar, which stood in the courtyard, rode away before Padilla had presence of mind to command his servants to stop him.

"When Padilla recovered himself, he would have had the ceremony proceed, but the count replied: 'You will pardon me there. After an interruption mysterious as this, I must have further explanation before I give the hand of my daughter.'

"What do you desire?" said Padilla.

"That letter," replied the count.

"That letter is to me," answered Padilla, reddening with anger.

"And my daughter is to me," returned the count.

"And shall never be to me," cried Padilla, turning away in wrath. 'By the depths of hell, I would sooner marry the skeletons of my first wives, than the daughter of such a man.'

"This is a solemn place to make such an appeal," replied the count, coolly, and pointing to the altar, 'there are witnesses, perhaps, unseen, who have heard it.'

"Padilla looked round him with a stare of horror. The count took the hand of his daughter, who stood pale and speechless, and led her away with an air of defiance that deprived Padilla of an answer.

"From that hour Don Padilla did not quit the castle. He appeared jealous of all around him, and suspicious of his own thoughts. I observed that when a company with his daughter, he gazed frequently upon Virginia with an eagerness I had no guide to explain. To me he was particularly reserved; but when he discovered the schemes of Raolo, by unfortunately finding the letter, his fury broke forth upon me in violence.

"I was sitting in my little room—you know the little gray chamber where I used to live, senior; I was sitting there and musing over old stories, and wondering in my mind who the stranger could have been, when Don Padilla entered in a tremendous fury, the letter of Raolo crumpled in one hand, and his sword drawn in the other. 'Villain!' cried he, stamping on the ground so loud, that the noise he made echoed along the hollow building. 'Villain! traitor! do I feed you, and maintain you here, that you may sting me to death? Is it you, old dotard, who are become the pander of profligate rakes? But thou shalt die; short is thy time to live.'

"With that he seized me by the hair of my head, and dashed me on the ground. I implored his compassion on my years and services, and pleaded my innocence and ignorance of what he alluded to.

"Thou liest, traitor!" cried he, in a frenzy of passion; 'I will thrust this letter down thy false throat with my sword, unless thou declarest the whole of this plot.'

"I swear by Heaven," cried I, 'that I am wholly ignorant. I know not even what plot you are hinting at. Is that the letter you received, my lord, from the stranger before the altar?'

"This question was ill-timed. His eye shot fire. A sudden resolution seemed to pass his mind, and he replied with a forced calmness: 'Gonzalez, thou wilt have leisure to repent provoking my feelings thus.'

"He turned away, and left me to muse upon his behavior, which appeared compounded of contradiction. If I could but gain a sight of that letter, thought I, my doubts would be removed. This thought became stronger as I indulged in it; and, when I learned the next day, that he was going to carry his daughter Almira to a convent in Madrid, I resolved in his absence to gratify my curiosity. I confess that, by so doing, I trespassed upon my duty, but curiosity was too powerful when so stimulated, and I could not, in my own mind, believe that Don Padilla had no other motive for confining Almira than discovering her in the garden with your servant.

"How to accomplish the design I had formed was the next object, and an object that puzzled me; for it was not to be supposed a letter of such consequences would be carelessly laid; and, indeed, it was most likely he would carry it about his person, in which case my researches would be useless. This, after much search, I concluded to be the fact, as I could find no traces of it in any of the open cabinets, and my honor did not permit me to be guilty of breaking open a lock. Thus I was obliged to suspend my curiosity till Padilla should return, and I endeavored to amuse the melancholy Virginia indulged, in the absence of her sister. She frequently paid visits to the little temple in the garden, and she seemed every time so sad, that I pitied her from my heart, but had no relief to give.

"After an absence of about a week Don Padilla re-

turned. His countenance was disguised in forced smiles, and he sought to be ever in the company of Virginia. So much and so sudden complacency raised in my mind suspicions of I knew not what, which his vague discourses on consanguinity did not tend to remove. I knew him to be a man capable of the most infamous proceedings, and I knew not how far his disappointments with several ladies, and his desire of an heir, might carry him.

"Surely," cried the marquis, "you are prompting your fancy, Gonzalez, to blacken a man already sufficiently detestable."

Gonzalez shook his head, and continued:

"You know not this man, senior. Report has said things of his youth, which it is not for me to repeat. Be that as it will, I resolved to watch his steps, and, in the most delicate manner, to caution my young lady against those little familiarities he, as her father, had some claim to exact.

"One night, as I lay between sleeping and waking, I fancied I heard a person walking along the passage, and it being beyond the hour when all the castle should have been still, I called aloud to know who was there; but no one returned an answer, and I arose to satisfy myself who this midnight rambler might be.

"I threw on my great watching cloak, and taking a light, went cautiously along the passage, and soon perceived a person walking before me in the dark. I called again, and, as before, received no answer. This evident desire of shunning me, raised my courage to pursue. The person was without any clothing but a loose nightgown, and as I drew near I perceived that he made motions in the air with his arms, muttering words which I did not distinctly hear.

"I approached, and perceived, to my no little terror, that it was Don Padilla himself, but he took no notice of me, appearing like a man delirious. He drew near the stairs leading to the eastern wing of the castle, and taking a key from his bosom opened the door, turning round as if to look along the avenue that none might follow. It was then for the first time I saw his countenance; it was pale and wan. His eyes were open, but fixed, and I was astonished he did not remark me, though I carried a light, and he proceeded in the dark.

"I should have returned in affright, but I remarked that he had no weapons, and my curiosity was raised to the extreme by the strangeness of the incident. As I became certain that he was delirious, or that he walked in his sleep, I followed him with a resolution, at which I have since shuddered, till he entered the large Gothic hall.

"He advanced toward the long table with the same facility in the dark, as though the hall had been lighted, and, seating himself in a chair, he pronounced several sentences I did not understand, and which I endeavored to hear by drawing nearer along the hangings. He started suddenly up, as he had done on the night of his second marriage, when the specter entered.

"Art thou there?" cried he, earnestly gazing with a glassy eye. 'What wouldst thou have, thou unreal image of the dead? Dost thou ask her? Seek her in the ocean. Yet they say she lives. Thou canst not live. No, no, thou art dead; and yet my coward soul would fear thee. Ha! wounds—one, two, three—bleeding too. But 'tis over, the deed is done, and I'm a wretch indeed. Why comest thou? Yes, I know, to torment me. But I am a man. Ha! What is that—a dagger? Mine too; yet I did not do it. No, thou canst not say that. Sleep, sleep perturbed spirit, sleep thou in peace. I will meet thee at another time. Now my soul is weary of watching.'

"Don Padilla moved some paces backwards with one hand extended forward, as if to defend himself, his countenance strangely agitated, and his eyes staring wildly. 'Follow me not!' cried he. 'Ah! Blood! Blood! Thy stains will not wear out. What wouldst thou? Dost thou ask to know if yet she lives? Better, oh, better hadst thou lived to know it. But when a deed is done, then wouldst thou repent and coward souls shrink from the action. But I have known crimes of older date, crimes of as deep a dye—he paused and folding his arms, bent his eyes upon the ground, still speaking in his sleep—yes, I have known such things as might indeed affright the slumbering dead. Were all the injured to rise—were the black grave to vomit up all its grisly skeletons, then would the earth witness such a scene as the sun would blush at. Do all the murdered rise again? No—then would legions of specters traverse o'er thy bleeding fields. Yet 'tis more strange—yet it is true; these aching eyes have seen him. (Don Padilla gazed round the hall.) He is not here; methought I saw him but a short while since, and now he is gone; perhaps to revel with the dead; or, shivering, creep with cold, unfleshy phantoms to the grave.'

"These wild and disordered speeches told me too well that the guilty mind of Padilla did not enjoy tranquillity. I knew not how to explain the words, she lives unless they had reference to the letter he had received from the stranger, and I more than ever desired to examine it.

"Don Padilla seemed more quiet after his speech. He walked slowly back, as he had entered, and I had some difficulty to pass without touching him at the outer door, which he looked with the same regularity as if he had been perfectly awake. I followed him to the door of his own chamber, where a lamp was constantly burning. He entered, and seated himself upon a sofa. I looked into the room with caution, fearing that having had his rambles, he might wake, and punish me for my curiosity. On a writing-desk lay a letter half folded. My eager eyes immediately caught the object, and my fancy persuaded me it was the letter I so much desired to see.

"I trembled with fear and impatience, and advancing on tiptoe, I grasped the prize. I held it to the lamp, and read these words: *Lady Zidana your injured wife, yet lives.* My eye had not glanced beyond the first line,

before Don Padilla, awakening suddenly started up at seeing me before him, and grasping me by the throat, cried out:

"Ha! villain I have detected you then, at last. Is it thus you creep to my chamber in the hour of midnight? What was thy purpose, wretch? Didst thou come to murder me? What! darest thou peruse my papers too? Thy curiosity shall be rewarded; but thou shalt keep the secret thou hast thus gained."

"I attempted, in vain, to offer an excuse; indeed, I was so self-convicted that I had no excuse to bring. My words expired in broken sentences, and I could say nothing clear but that I had no evil intention.

"Thou art a bad sophist," said he, contemptuously. 'I know thy crimes; but this is proof. Thou canst not make me discredit my senses. It is now midnight—I awake, and find thee reading my letters, traitorously breaking that sacred duty a servant owes his lord.' He seized his sword and I expected instant death; but yet I had some little hope from the coolness of his manner. He took down the lamp. 'Follow me, my trusty Gonzalez,' said he, 'thy services have been long and great.'

"Therefore, my lord," said I, this error should claim some pity: for on my knees I protest, and I take Heaven to witness, it was almost involuntary."

"Rise, dotard," cried he, in a fierce voice, 'you plead too late. Follow me and be silent.'

"I did not dare disobey, though I expected that I was walking to my own execution, and would have lingered in the passage, but his gathering frowns obliged me to move on. In this melancholy situation he conducted me into the eastern wing of the building, by a door on the ground floor, and passed through several dark and dreary passages, which struck my soul with new apprehensions, perhaps as fearful as the reality I expected.

"He paused at the end of a long passage, and opened a large iron door, which, being painted the color of the wall, I had never seen before. It opened on a dark and frightful descent, which I had no doubt led into the dungeons under the castle, where, in former times, prisoners had been confined.

"We shall not have many witnesses here," said he, pointing down the stairs; 'do me the favor to advance.'

"I stood still, and a rush of wind sighed along the passage, grating the iron door on its rusty hinges. He advanced before, and commanding me to follow, began to descend.

"The steps were slippery with mildew, and I had some difficulty to prevent my tottering feet betraying me, and plunging me at once I knew not where. The chill damps struck upon me, and the stagnant vapors dripped from the archway. About fifty paces of a winding stair brought us to the bottom. The deep darkness of the place prevented my seeing many yards before me, and the noisome air at first almost deprived me of breath. He turned a little to the right, and forcing back a rusty bolt, opened the door of a cell, so wretched and so dark, that my soul seemed to die within me.

"Look in, Gonzalez," said he, in a taunting tone; 'tell me how you like this apartment. I have long thought of rewarding you, and I do not see how I can do it better than by making you master for life of a chamber in my castle.'

"Surely," said I, shrinking back with horror, 'you cannot have an idea of condemning me to perish in this loathsome dungeon, inhabited by the foulest vermin. I ask it as a mercy, that you would rather plunge the sword you carry into my heart.'

"I am not a man of violence," returned he, earnestly looking at me, 'else might I take your advice. I will leave you here to meditate on the things your prying curiosity has discovered.'

"My lord," replied I, 'I acknowledge my guilt and my folly; but here, in this dread mansion of misery, I solemnly swear it was unintended. I call upon the wandering spirit of the unfortunate Count Ferendez, which is now perhaps roaming through these dungeons, to witness the truth of what I say.' I saw by his countenance that I had touched upon the right string; I saw that his mind was affected by supernatural dread, and that however he might attempt to conceal it, the appearance of the specter had left upon him an impression never to be effaced.

"He stared around him ready to start at his own shade; he seemed uneasy in his situation; and though he commanded me to enter the dungeon, it was in a voice tempered by fear. I approached the door, starting back with a violence not altogether feigned; for I was shocked at the unspeakable loathsomeness of the place.

"Heaven protect me! what do I see?" exclaimed I, crossing myself with fervor. 'Art thou, indeed, himself? Tell me, tell me, Don Padilla, if my master be really dead, or only confined in that dungeon?'

"Your master," repeated he, in an under voice, and with a look of the greatest horror. Where? What?'

"There, there," cried I, pointing with my hand. 'Do you not see how he bleeds?'

"Don Padilla was too much off his guard to discover my deception; his own words, which I had heard not an hour before, served me to urge his terrors; and a loud rush of wind happening to wave the door of the dungeon, which echoed the hollow creak of the hinges, he forgot all discretion, and turning suddenly round, he hurried up the stairs without once looking to see if I followed him.

"I turned the key of the door hastily when we gained the top, and concealing it in my cloak, ran after Padilla, who had forgot every caution in his haste to gain a distance from that object, which, whether real or imaginary, is ever present to his fancy, and I have no doubt embitters every moment of his life.

"I retired to my chamber, resolved as soon as the morning dawned to quit the castle, and seek some place of safety. Don Padilla, perhaps, suspected my



design. He sent for me when I was making some little arrangements.

"Come hither, Gonzalez," said he, in a voice where pride struggled with the remains of fear; "you know how necessary it is that the privacy of a superior, or indeed of any individual, should be sacred; you will not wonder, then, that I was transported almost beyond the bounds of reason at so flagrant a breach of honor in one I had so much dependence upon, especially when you remember that you have not guarded your lips on all occasions with that discretion I had expected, and agreeably to the oath you once swore on a particular event. I am willing, however, even now to forgive you and to reinstate you, for the sake of your former mistress; but as you value your own peace and mine, be more discreet in future."

"I retired, in my mind unresolved; all my former fears for the Lady Virginia arose afresh, and I fancied that none but myself would have power to save her in case of danger. This reason determined me to remain some time longer in the castle, and I must confess my fears every day became stronger. Virginia was without suspicion, because she was innocent itself; but I by no means liked the eye of Padilla when in her presence; it spoke to me plainly the villainy of his heart."

"I passed over many unpleasant observations I made to an incident which confirmed all my suspicions. I had been much fatigued during the day, overlooking some stores of Italian preservers, and had fallen asleep in the room where they were kept, and which was some distance from my own."

"When I awoke I was surprised to find it night, and the moon shining clear through the windows. I started up, and being well acquainted with the way, ventured along the galleries in the dark. I had to pass the rooms belonging to the ladies, and as I advanced through the galleries, I was startled with the appearance of a man coming from the other end with a lamp in his hand. I saw at once it was Don Padilla, and I fancied he was taking another nocturnal ramble in his sleep. I stood still, watching his advance, but I soon perceived, by his cautious motion, every moment pausing to listen, that he was not now insensible to his actions, and these signs of fear were no indications of good. He advanced about half way along the gallery, and paused at the outer door of Virginia's apartments. He laid his hand upon the lock to open it, looking round him, no doubt, with guilty apprehension."

"'Monster!' thought I, 'can no tie, however sacred, restrain thee?' I considered a moment how I should act without bringing upon myself destruction. I knew well the effects of fear upon his coward soul, and I groaned aloud. He instantly shrunk back, and stood for a moment to listen. I repeated the expedient in a deeper tone, and, being certain he could not see me, I uttered in a screaming voice, the word—*Beware!* It had a magical effect. He was too much struck with fear to inquire whence the words proceeded, immediately returning to his chamber."

"It required in me the greatest delicacy to remove the veil from the eyes of Virginia. It was a task for which I was not fitted, and which I knew not how to undertake. I wrote a note in a disguised hand, warning her to beware of some dreadful calamity, from a quarter that she least expected. In it I urged her to fly from the castle, and to join her sister at Madrid, and signed the note with the name of her mother. I took an opportunity of placing it in a way that it should appear as mysterious as possible, and I had the satisfaction to perceive that she was considerably alarmed."

"On the second day after this, she took an opportunity, when she knew her father was taking his usual repose at noon, to request my attendance in her chamber. She there questioned me relating to her mother; and as my answers were couched in ambiguous terms, mingled with profession of service and fidelity, she, with some hesitation, produced the billet."

"I pretended to be considerably surprised, particularly as the hand much resembled that of her deceased mother, and counseled her to fly to her sister by the first opportunity. 'Old as I am, lady,' said I, 'I will attend you. A warning such as this should be regarded with reverence as from a superior intelligence, and I am grieved to say I do not think it impossible to surmise from whence the danger is to be apprehended.'

"Her curiosity now became strong, and after much entreaty I hinted to her something of the character of Padilla, and opened her eyes to a thousand circumstances, which I myself had not opportunity to see, and which she had regarded as parental affection. I related to her the incident I had lately witnessed, my words sunk deep upon her mind, and though she would not consent to fly, she yet dreaded to stay, and entreated that I would, from time to time, give her my counsel."

"Thus some time longer passed away, and the increased familiarities of Padilla became too pointed to be endured; so much so, indeed, that Virginia shut herself up in her chamber under pretense of illness. Don Padilla was not thus to be repulsed when his passions were once set afloat, and I expected every day that the storm would break out."

"I was awakened not many nights after by a loud noise in the gallery. I heard the screams of a woman, and starting hastily up, opened the door, and, the lady Virginia, half dressed and half dead with terror, flew into my arms. 'Save me, Gonzales,' cried she. 'O, my father!'

"Where?" demanded I. "What of him?"

"Let me never see him more," cried she trembling. "Take me away, anywhere, but let me never see him more."

"I knew not how to proceed. I hastened to dress, entreating she would compose herself. The voice of Don Padilla ran along the passage, but his words were so mingled with oaths and threats that I could not understand him. He entered my room in a violent fury, which was evidently raised by liquor, and I did not

think myself safe in his presence. He was dressed in a loose gown, which, trailing on the ground, impeded his steps, and gave me time to draw Virginia away by another door, which I closed behind me."

"Don Padilla stormed like a man insane, and, as we ran along the way to the back staircase, I heard the door burst open, and his steps behind us. He vowed vengeance as he ran, and the stillness of night conveyed his execrations along the passages, and urged our flight. Virginia was too much frightened to speak, and, though I carried a lamp in my hand, my surprise, and fear, and perplexity was so great, that I mistook the right turning, taking the way to the eastern side of the building."

"Virginia was so faint, and my steps were so feeble, that notwithstanding the intoxication of Don Padilla, he evidently gained upon us. The door on the ground floor of the eastern wing had been left open since the night that I had been its unwilling visitant; and without other consideration than to gain the greatest possible distance, I hurried along the first passage that presented. It terminated at the iron door which led into those loathsome dungeons, and, on looking round, I beheld Padilla, with a taper in one hand, and a sword in the other, at less than fifty paces behind."

"We have no choice, lady," said I; "one of us must fall if we remain here. Let us trust in Providence and use the only means which we have left."

"I took the key, which I still retained, Padilla probably having not acquired sufficient courage to seek it; I opened the harsh-sounding door, and with gentle violence forced Virginia, almost fainting, to descend pulling the door behind us."

"Since the night I had first been in this dreary chain of vaults, I had more than once retraced all that I had ever heard concerning them, from which I had gathered that one passage led into the great vault under the chapel, which was used as a family tomb, and the other to a useless aqueduct, that had formerly supplied the castle with water in time of siege. By either of these ways I fancied it would be possible to escape, if I could retain so much resolution and presence of mind as to support the horrors that surrounded us."

"When my dear young lady gained the bottom of the steps, she looked round her with a glance of inquiry that shrunk back almost in despair. 'Alas!' cried she, as she leaned on my arm, 'into what place have you led me, Gonzales? where does this conduct us? do you know the way?'

"This question touched me nearly, but summoning all my courage, 'Be not affrighted,' I replied, 'this lamp will light us. I have been before down these steps; imagination is more fearful than reality.'

"The lamp streamed faintly through the stagnant and gloomy vapors. My blood crept chilly over me as I passed the dungeons where Don Padilla had designed to entomb me."

"How damp and close is this terrible place," said Virginia. "Never did I suppose that beneath so splendid a building as this magnificent castle, there were dungeons so wretched, that the heart dies at the supposition that they could ever have been inhabited."

"Not willingly, I believe," replied I; "but who knows in early times what unfortunate prisoners here sighed out their existence, or what interdicted chiefs concealed themselves from the vengeance of their victors."

"The wind crept along the dropping and encrusted walls in a faint motion, undulating the flame of the lamp, and calling to our fancy pictures of fear, Virginia frequently started at the mournful sounds passed by, and died away in impenetrable gloom. 'It seems to me,' said she, 'as if each of these deep cells yet retained its prisoner, whose repeated sighs pass by me, and strike upon my heart.'

"The passage now branched in opposite directions, and I paused in painful irresolution. Virginia read my disquietude, and trembled. 'Do you not know the way?' said she. 'Oh, gracious Virgin, protect us! If we should wander here, and never find an outlet?'

"There was an accent of despair in this sentence which increased my own confusion. 'Not so, my dear lady,' I replied; 'at worst we can but return. We will commit ourselves to the holy saints, and I trust we shall not repent the confidence.'

"We struck down the avenue that appeared the least obscure. It was narrow and low, and I found, on examination, it was built of hewn stone. The stream of air was purer, breathing a freshness that assured me of an intercourse with open air, and I made no doubt but we were now in the channel of the aqueduct. My courage revived at this remark, and we followed its various windings, which appeared to us without end, for more than half a mile, as I judged from the time. At length we found the way choked up with some fragments of the wall, which had fallen in, and we stood still, struck dumb with the disappointment."

"To retrace again the tedious and dismal way was what I could not think upon without dismay, and how to remove the barrier I had no means."

"Virginia was so much overcome by this unforeseen termination of our rising hopes, that she became sick, and sat down upon the damp and broken ruins to recover the faintness that oppressed her. My mind was torn with anxiety, and I repented, when too late, the blind precipitation which had led me to explore this unknown way."

"While I supported the almost fainting maid, I cast my eyes round through the foggy vapors that surrounded us; I examined the heap of rubbish which choked up the way, and I fancied it possible to creep over, immediately under the center of the arch. But then it was impossible Virginia could advance first; and while I tried the way, she must remain alone and in the dark, when, probably, her courage might forsake her, and she might expire with fear."

"I explained the absolute necessity that there was for our hazarding so much, and I endeavored to inspire

her with resolution to remain alone in the dark, while I should endeavor to force an opening. She was nearly sinking at my feet as I spoke. 'I am a coward,' said she, her lips pale as her cheeks. 'I believe I am dying. Bury me here, Gonzales, in this place, that my father may never behold me again.'

"My best, my dearest lady," said I, ready to sink myself with apprehension at her changing countenance, 'you alarm yourself too much. Consider this place as a common vault, and half the terror ceases; fancy it your own room, and in the dark you cannot tell the difference; half our fears are ideal, and our apprehensions groundless. I will leave you the lamp. I will undertake to seek an opening alone, and I trust that Heaven will give success to my design; if not, if I do not return to you in an hour, take the lamp, and retrace your way to the castle.'

"Never," she said, 'never could I reach it. There is no way, no retreat, and here we must die.'

"I started up with the resolution of despair. 'I will, at least, make an attempt,' said I; 'fortune may befriend us.' I clambered over the loose rubbish, and creeping cautiously forward for half a yard, it gradually sloped away, and I found myself entangled with roots of trees entwisted together. I put out my hands to remove them, and a smooth round substance met my touch. I traced my fingers over it, and distinguished the eyes, the nose, the mouth of a human skull. My arm was tormented with a numbing pulsy, and my soul, for a moment, was shocked to its deepest feeling. I shuddered, snatching away my hand as though a serpent had bit it. For some moments I was too agitated to form a clear judgment, when, fancying that my senses might have been mistaken, I again ventured to reach out my hand, and following from the forehead with a resolution which arose from desperation, I touched the bones of the chest, one of which seemed broken, and I was then convinced I was not deceived."

"So horrid an interruption confounded all my senses. I saw the impossibility of leading Virginia through this opening till the daylight should allow me to remove this fearful object, and also to cut away some of the shrubs which completely overhung and filled up the entrance."

"I returned, and found Virginia more dead than alive; but my presence raised her drooping spirits. I prepared her for the shocking spectacle we were to pass, which she guessed might have been some unfortunate traveler; but, from the situation, other suggestions arose in my mind."

"Our lamp expired before the dawn of day shed a faint light over the fallen rubbish. The fresh air softly whispered through the interwoven foliage. I encouraged Virginia to the undertaking, and with difficulty we passed over the barrier, and forced a way through the entangled roots."

"The purple morning streamed at a distance, and not a fleecy cloud dappled the azure vault of the heavens. The dews of the night hung upon every flower and every leaf, and a deep mist rolled amongst the underwood of the forest, obscuring the view, and enveloping distance in shade. Virginia acquired fresh spirits as she breathed the balmy breath of the morn, and tripped lightly along the paths, where the short grass spread a carpet figured with a thousand sparkling flowers."

"We reached the cottage of Perez before any one was abroad, and knocking at the door, the old man received us with surprise and apprehensive curiosity. He placed before us cakes and milk, of which we partook, while he made ready two mules. On these we departed, while the first rays of the sun gilded the turrets of Montillo at a distance, and raised a canopy of vapor over the top of the dark brown forest."

"Virginia had taken the dress of one of Perez's daughters, and I disguised myself as a peasant, hoping, in the lowliness of our appearance, to find that security the strongest arms could but partially afford. We hired a guide at the first pass: he was a merry entertaining fellow, and his stories served to divert our attention from the dangers of the way."

"The common accidents of the road brought us at length to the banks of the Tagus; but, having avoided the great road, we learned that we yet wanted some leagues of Madrid. The lowering clouds hung black and broken over the face of the declining sun, their thin edges were bordered with purple, and the rising winds sounded the signal of approaching rain."

"On the banks of the river I perceived, at a distance, the roof of a rising palace, and I made no doubt we might there find shelter from the coming storm. We found the way much longer than we had first expected, and the rain overtook us at a considerable distance. We were completely wet by the time we entered this house, which we learned, with no little satisfaction, belonged to you, senor, though at first the delicacy of Virginia would have shrunk back."

"I remarked to her that chance or Providence had, evidently, conducted us where she ought to have designed to go, and that now she ought not to scruple, from false delicacy, accepting your roof as her protection."

"Our humble appearance did not prepossess your servant in our favor; but Raolo, happening to enter the hall, quickly distinguished who we were, and, in the first moments of his satisfaction and hurry to have us conducted where we could change our dripping garments, he forgot to inform you of our arrival. It was my folly planned for you a little surprise, from which I hoped more pleasing effects, but, alas! who, in this world, ever tasted pleasure without a mixture of pain?"

"I thank you, my friend," said the marquis; "it was my over rashness and blindness that has occasioned this melancholy catastrophe. I am astonished at the boldness of your escape; but I remarked that you passed over in silence the ultimate reason of Virginia's



flight. My soul is on the rack, Gonzalez. Has the monster, Don Padilla?"

"Your apprehensions hurry you too far," replied Gonzalez. "I am certain, my young lady would never have lived had they been realized; but thanks be to Heaven, the virtuous seldom fall if they determine to conquer. Virginia had been alarmed by suggestions, and the billet she had received, made upon her the stronger impression, as she was little acquainted with the world."

"On the night of her flight she retired to rest, from which she was suddenly awakened by a noise which Don Padilla made in approaching her chamber; for having been free with the bottle to help his resolution, he had the less caution in his actions."

"The sight of her father at that hour, and in that place, recalled all that she had reflected upon, and she started up immediately, calling for help. Don Padilla, half confounded at such a reception, grasped her by the arm, commanding her to silence. It was then he explained to her his horrible intentions, mingled with oaths and threats; and as he found that she still struggled to fly, calling aloud for help, he had the brutality to grasp her by the throat, with intention to murder her. It was almost by a miracle that she disengaged his hand, and, snatching up a long bed-gown, darted through the passages screaming for assistance, which it was, fortunately, in my power to afford."

The Marquis of Denia repeated his vows of revenge, and the narrative of the old man having broken far upon the night, he retired to rest, after inquiring the health of the wounded maid.

#### CHAPTER XVI.

"Ye powers! cut off his dangerous thread of life,  
Lest his black sins rise higher in account  
Than hell has pains to punish.—Shakespeare."

THE day arose, the noon passed away, and the evening came on which Almira was to meet the Marquis de los Velos in the garden of the convent. Her friend Valedia employed all her powers of persuasion, and suffered not her mind to retract from the unwilling engagement.

The heavenly vision of the beautiful Saphira was ever present, and if she closed her eyes in reflection, the spirit seemed beckoning her away. She beheld, with regret, the shades of night fall upon the dark foliage of the garden, as she sat musing upon a latticed balcony, which overlooked the grounds.

"Perhaps," said she, with a sigh, "this is the last time my eyes shall be open upon the declining orb of day, for to-morrow they may be closed forever to the beams of that bright planet; then shall I be insensible of the luster of nature, and grateful breezes will refresh me no more."

"Why," said Valedia, tenderly taking her hand, "why do you indulge so much sadness, my love? You sigh as if your heart were breaking."

"I am, indeed, very sad," replied Almira; "grievous thoughts intrude upon me, and I almost wish myself in Heaven."

"That," said Valedia, "is a pious wish; but many years may it be, my dear, before it is accomplished."

"Probably," said Almira, with a solemn emphasis, "probably not many hours hence. Something tells me as much; and should it so happen, Valedia, you will remember my words. There is the vesper bell. Now, my dear sister Virginia will play over the evening hymn on her lute. I will go to the chapel, and accompany her in duty."

Valedia was struck with the singular melancholy which intoned the voice, and threw languor over the motions of her friend; and she could not but attend her with a mixture of sadness. Almira engaged in the service with avidity; she seemed to detach her whole existence from earth, and strain after things beyond knowledge. She remained in the church some time after the conclusion of the service, till every surrounding image was cast into obscurity, and no light remained but the lamps which perpetually burned before the altar.

"Remember, my friend," said Almira, "whom I shall now intrust to you before the foot of the holy place; and as I know not what will be the event of this night, you will either keep silence or speak as that shall hereafter appear. The spirit of my late young friend, whose body remains beneath this chapel, has warned me that this night I shall go hence; but whether from this convent, or this world, time must determine. You will witness for me that my intentions were not ill."

Valedia, who for the first time had listened to so singular an event, was powerfully impressed with the same fears, and began to regret the part she herself had taken, and to wish, she knew not why, that the morning was returned. She entreated Almira to be more circumstantial in her relation, and when she had listened to the particulars, entreated that she would by no means think of attending the engagement, which seemed so combined with an unknown catastrophe.

"No," replied Almira, "I have given my word. He will be in these gardens, and his rashness and disappointment may produce some ill consequence to himself. Indeed, if the words of my deceased friend have meaning, I myself cannot avert their power."

"I have been told in the world," said Valedia, "that we often give truth to prophecy, by acting as if it were unavoidable, but I am unable to counsel; only this I know, that if any ill ensues, I shall never have any satisfaction again."

"Now you are as superstitious as myself," said Almira, with a faint smile; "that which we do for the best we should never regret. Come, let us go to my cell, we shall be remarked."

One hour passed over the other, the nuns retired to meditation or to rest, and silence had long reigned

throughout this dreary abode, when the bell of the chapel solemnly and slowly struck twelve; every vibration sounded along the building. "Come, my friend," said Almira, starting up, "that which must be done it is folly to delay; we must hasten, or the sisters, who attend midnight prayers, will detect us."

She took up the lamp which burned before the crucifix, and taking the arm of Valedia, they softly descended the stairs, starting at the smallest sound, like the frightened fawn, which flies from the falling leaf as it waves in the air. They passed along the cloisters with caution, every moment looking behind, and, with some difficulty, drew the bolt of the door which opened into the garden.

A cool freshness breathed around them, and their lamp scarce served to light them through the dark alleys of intertwined foliage. Their steps lightly touched the ground, and when they reached within twenty paces of the appointed place, they concealed the lamp amongst some myrtle bushes. In a few minutes they gained the bottom of the garden, where the wall entered the private and narrow streets.

They stood still a moment in silence, Almira leaning upon her friend for support, when a gentle whisper warned them of the presence of Antonio, who, the next minute, stood before them.

"Lovely Almira," said he, in a tremulous voice, almost out of breath with impatient satisfaction, "this is a happiness my wishes scarcely dared aspire to. Every preparation is ready for your flight. You may this moment quit a place where it is impossible you should ever be happy."

At the first pause he made, Almira replied: "Antonio, it is to me a severe grief that I cannot repair your friendship but by what may appear ingratitude. It is indeed impossible that I should venture beyond these walls. Heaven has willed!"

"Oh, talk not thus!" interrupted Antonio. "It would drive me raving. I must not, will not quit you, Almira. Now is the moment to escape; this lost, and we may never meet again."

"Hear me," cried Almira; "you know not the reasons I have."

"Let me first speak mine," said the impatient Antonio. "Valedia, why do not you plead for me?"

"She has," replied Almira. "It is from her entreaties that I have now come to tell you."

"Say on, my angel, and bless me with the sounds," cried Antonio, passionately, taking her hand.

"Let me entreat you to be tranquil," returned Almira; "this passion does not become the solemnity and danger of this place. I was going to say, that it is impossible we should ever be happy if our connection needs the subterfuges of illicit proceeding; and to say that my solemn determination is never to—"

"Hold! hold!" exclaimed Antonio, eagerly. "Distraction! that all my hopes, which I have run forward to and hung upon this moment—but you must, by Heaven, you shall hear what I have to urge, before I receive so fatal a resolution. I have this day seen the Marquis of Denia; your sister Virginia has taken shelter from her father's injustice beneath his roof. An illness, which I cannot at present explain, has reduced her nearly to death. What would be so delightful to her as to receive your attendance, and be entertained by that voice she always delighted to hear?"

"Is what you tell me absolutely true?" said Almira.

"But you seek to deceive me, marquis."

"By the eternal Father of mankind, I swear," cried Antonio, "that what I tell you is truth. The moments are most precious; even while we are debating, we may lose an opportunity never to be regained."

"But will Valedia accompany me to my sister's," said Almira. "Methinks it is not prudent to be known to fly in company alone with a man."

"Prejudice," murmured Antonio. "It is not necessary, and might betray us. Here, wrap yourself in my cloak, and take my hat and feather, while I take your long black veil. Thus we shall be certain to elude any surprise; for if any hardy cavalier should take me for a nun, he will chance to be roughly handled."

The ladies were pleased with the metamorphosis, which seemed to insure protection.

"I would it were light," said Valedia to Almira, "that I might see the prettiest cavalier my eyes ever beheld. But give me a kiss, senor, and then away."

The half hour chimed upon the convent clock, and Almira felt a tremor creep over her limbs as she saluted her friend; for then all her fears returned. The noise of a person rushing through the bushes attracted their fearful regards. A stranger darted forward, who, through the dull obscurity, appeared clad like Antonio himself, whose hat and feather were usually set on with an air that rendered him remarkable.

"Villain!" cried he, with a loud voice, "now shalt thou feel the strength of my arm." As he uttered this threat, he threw himself forward upon the disguised Almira, and plunged a poniard into her bosom. The unhappy maid sank before the blow, the purple blood streaming over her friend.

"Thy prediction is accomplished," sighed she, as she fell backward. "It was cold!"

Her words dropped in a murmur; and Valedia, incapable of supporting her friend, sank beneath her to the ground. Antonio, for some seconds, was totally deprived of sense; but vengeance rising superior to every other passion, he drew his stiletto, darting after the flying murderer, who had uttered a cry of bitter anguish when the sound of Almira's voice reached his ear. He fled hastily over the wall, and descended the ladder by which Antonio had entered. The Marquis de los Velos gained the top of the wall; his long black veil twisted round his waist in the hurry of pursuit as the assassin reached the middle of the ladder.

A man wholly enveloped in a dark cloak, with a mask upon his face, stood at the bottom of the ladder, with a dark lantern in one hand, and a drawn sword in the other. "Tis the Marquis de los Velos himself," said he; and without other words he made a lunge at

the person descending, and wounded him severely with his sword. He was going to repeat his thrust, when a pistol bullet, fired from a distance, laid him upon the ground. The person on the ladder staggered, and would have fallen had he not been prevented by another stranger, who had fired the pistol. At the same instant Antonio, disguised in the nun's veil, reached the ground.

"What is all this, madam?" said the stranger who was last arrived, and who mistook Antonio for a nun. "Is this the Marquis de los Velos, who, I fear, is severely wounded?"

"Merciful father!" cried Antonio. "Who is it that speaks to me? Is it the spirit of my early friend, Fernando de Coello?"

"That is my name," said the stranger; "but tell me, who are you that speak to me with the voice of a man, and yet wear the garb of a nun?"

Antonio replied in accents choked with grief: "Alas! I am the most wretched of men—I am Antonio de los Velos; in this disguise I have witnessed the most barbarous of murders. I beg you, Fernando, come with me into this garden; the body of Almira, your cousin, lies bleeding on the ground."

"She is not dead, then?" said the wounded man, in a voice they both knew to belong to Don Padilla.

"Who is this at the foot of the ladder, Fernando, that you have murdered, no doubt intending the shot for me?"

"No," answered Fernando, coolly, "thou shalt have justice, Don Padilla; a higher power than my arm hangs over thee."

"Let my dagger drink his blood," cried Antonio, darting at him: "'tis a poor and pitiful revenge for the ill I have received."

"Hold!" cried Fernando, seizing him by the arm, "there has been too much blood shed already. This man who lies here, from the words he uttered, mistook Padilla for you, and it was to save your life I fired upon him."

Fernando then stooped, and holding the lantern to the face of the dead man, "I know not," said he, "where, but somewhere I have certainly seen this countenance; 'tis a countenance, once seen, not easily forgotten."

Padilla pronounced the name of Jacques, enuring his folly in adopting a disguise, which betrayed him to the over-zealous sword of his own creature, who had that day received a note, ordering his attendance at this spot, where he had not arrived till Padilla had entered the garden by the ladder Antonio had placed against the wall.

"This is a most singular group of circumstances," said Fernando, "and evidently conducted by a power superior to ourselves. Follow me, Antonio, into the garden; the unfortunate Almira must not remain there."

Antonio attended Fernando, more dead than alive; indeed he scarcely knew what was passing before him, his mind being so overcome with the magnitude of the misfortune he had suffered, and the strange combination of incidents. He mounted the ladder—the wounded Padilla sat groaning upon the pavement.

Fernando advanced first, with the lantern in his hand; Valedia lay insensible on the ground beneath the body of her friend, but so covered with blood that they feared she had also been killed.

Antonio was unable to afford any assistance; he stood as if fixed to the spot by some powerful spell, while Fernando attempted to remove the body of Almira from the arms of Valedia. He placed his hand upon her cheek, and fancied that it retained some warmth. Enraptured with the possibility of yet saving her, he cried out, "She lives! Antonio, lend your assistance."

Fernando raised her in his arms. The pulsation of her heart was faintly perceptible, a deep sigh breathed from the bottom of her breast; she stretched out her limbs with a slight convulsive motion, and at that instant the bell of the convent tolled one.

"It is all over," said Fernando. "Poor Almira, short has been thy existence. Who is that other lady, Antonio? Let us at least save one life."

"I fear she is dead," replied Antonio, in accents of grief. "I am the unfortunate cause of this wretched tragedy."

Fernando found it was in vain to desire him to act with consistency; he gently laid the body of Almira upon the ground, and raising her friend in his arms, discovered evident signs of life; and, by degrees, as he chafed her temples, she uttered half sentences of indistinct meaning. At last she opened her eyes.

"Where am I?" said she. "Almira, what does all this mean? Ah! I remember. Oh, wretched me!"

Again she closed her eyes, and relapsed into insensibility. Fernando was distressed. Concerns of great consequence required him at another part of Madrid; it was by accident he had been entangled in this strange adventure, out of which he knew not how to extricate himself. A thousand expedients passed rapidly through his mind, but these were interrupted by a confused noise in the street, and a glare of torches, which spread a light above the high walls of the convent. He had not time to conjecture what new incident had occurred, before he perceived two officers of the Holy Inquisition mounted on the wall, and descending into the garden, followed by several more, bearing torches.

"You are prisoners of the Holy Office," cried one of the foremost. "I command you to surrender. What is the meaning of this outrage and sacrilege in the garden of the Dominican Nuns?"

"Sir," replied Fernando, while he supported Valedia, "I am almost as ignorant as yourself. It is not half an hour since I was passing this street, having in fact arrived in Madrid after the gates were shut. I learned from this nobleman, whom you see wrapped in a nun's veil, that a lady had been murdered in these gardens by her own father, Don Padilla, and I ventured over these sacred boundaries to see if I could possibly af-



ford assistance. Your detention of me will be of the most serious consequences to myself, and cannot be of any advantage to you."

"Is not your name Fernando de Coello?" said the officer, who remarked his military dress. "I believe your story, as I was myself at the guard-house when you were admitted with his majesty's passport. You had a lady in your company, a foreigner?"

"I had so," returned Fernando; "she is a person of distinction, and being in a strange country will be grievously alarmed at my absence. On the word of a gentleman and a soldier, you may depend on my appearing at your first summons."

"That is a very unnecessary assurance," said the officer; "our office is never disobeyed. Is that lady you support living or dead?"

"Living, I believe, but extremely low."

"Deliver her to us, she must be carried to our tribunal. A transaction like this in the gardens of the Dominican Nuns must be strictly examined."

Fernando knew how useless it would be to remonstrate. He feared lest caprice might incline them to detain him also; and, though he felt something like shame in quitting Antonio, he knew, also, that if he could be of any service, it must be on the outside of those walls, where the rich and the poor were alike treated with severity.

The murmur of so many voices, and the glare of the torches, awakened Valedia to sensibility; and, fixing her eyes upon Fernando, she exclaimed: "Am I alive, or am I already in the other world? Are you Fernando de Coello? Gracious Heavens! Can it be himself?"

"Valedia!" cried Fernando; "my early little friend, and must I leave you in this situation?"

"Leave me," repeated she, staring upon the dark figures which surrounded her bearing the lights: "ah! where am I? Speak to me, Fernando—who are these?"

Her terror was again too much for her weakened nerves; and however the breast of Fernando was torn by the impossibility of administering relief, he yet lamented that he must leave to the rough hands of men, injured to human misery, a young lady in so much distress.

During the whole of this scene Antonio uttered nothing but lamentations for the death of Almira, and vows of vengeance upon Don Padilla. He seemed wholly unconcerned at what was passing, and suffered himself to be led prisoner, without the smallest resistance. The whole party quitted the gardens, and descended into the street, where the furious Don Padilla, notwithstanding his wound, struggled to release himself from the man who held him, denouncing, alternately, the accident, the Inquisition, and himself.

Fernando having delivered his lovely burden to one of the officials, and embraced his friend, whom he entreated to act with a little more fortitude, was departing, which Don Padilla observing cried aloud:

"Do you suffer that man to escape? I charge him with having attempted my life; it is by his sword I am wounded!"

The ready officers immediately seized Fernando, who trembled at the danger he ran of being detained, which he would willingly have resisted at the hazard of his life, but that he knew it was morally useless. Fernando had seen too much real danger to be confused at this unpleasant incident.

"I will convince this man," said he, pointing to Don Padilla, "of his error." Then drawing his saber, which glittered by the light of the torches as he moved it rapidly before the eyes of the officers, "I may venture to say," continued he, "that had I thrust this instrument of my country's vengeance through the body of that wretch, he had before this closed his eyes in everlasting darkness."

The archers were convinced, and Don Padilla, half abashed, endeavored to accuse him of the murder of Jacques; but the archers, not giving credit to his assertions, which Fernando treated with lightness, he was suffered to escape, watching from a distance the sad procession, which the time of the night, and the flames of the torches, rendered beyond description gloomy.

Fernando, having extricated himself from this unpleasant situation, hurried to the inn where he had taken lodgings on his arrival that night at Madrid. His servant had waited for him a long time with anxiety, fearing, from the lateness of the hour, that some accident had happened.

A young lady flew into his arms, and expressed her satisfaction at his return. "I feared," said she, "that you had fallen into danger, and my heart trembled lest I should never see you more."

"Now then, my Selina," said Fernando, pressing her to his breast, "let the little flutterer rest, for I am here in safety."

"Holy Prophet!" exclaimed the lady, starting back; "but there is blood upon your clothes; you are wounded, and conceal it."

"I am not, indeed," replied he; "be satisfied, my Selina, it was a trifling rencounter, very common in this country."

"Then I shall wish myself away from Spain; but if you are not wounded, whence is this blood?"

Fernando found the necessity of an explanation. "I was returning from the palace of the Marquis of Denia, who, I found, was not in town, when this accident happened." He then related the adventure of the night, and after some preparation, informed her that it was his cousin Almira who was killed, and that her sister Virginia lay ill at the country house of the Marquis of Denia; "to which place," said he, "we will depart early in the morning. You will there find a secure retreat; and you can take charge of Virginia, while myself and the marquis return to Madrid, to exert our endeavors in behalf of our friends. It is a rude welcome you receive, my Selina, on your arrival in the capital of my native country."

"Fate," replied Selina, "is busy with us, and we must attend its decrees. I am eager to embrace Vir-

ginia, in whom I am certain to find a sister; and had Almira lived to receive me, my fortune would have been complete."

It was late, and giving orders for a chaise in the morning, they retired to rest.

## CHAPTER XVII.

The world is dark with night; the winds are still;  
Faintly the moon her pallid light makes gleam;  
The risen spirits the silent churchyard fill.  
With elfin fairies joining in the dream,  
The forest sheeneth with the silver team.—Chatterton.

In the morning Fernando hastened to depart, fearing that an order from the Inquisition might arrest him before he should be upon the road, as he could have little doubt but Don Padilla would denounce him as the destroyer of Jacques, though that destruction saved his own life, from the mistaken fury of his too faithful instrument.

Selina dressed herself in the Eastern style, over which she tied the Spanish traveling cloak, that they might escape the gaze of vulgar curiosity. About nine they proceeded on the road, and Fernando was delighted with the remarks of his charming companion.

Selina took no small pleasure in the beautiful scenery that adorned the roads which they passed. Groves of olives, limes, and chestnut, shaded the sides of the way; the eye was delighted with the golden fields of saffron, mingled with others of corn; and Selina compared (in the language of her own country) the pastures covered with flocks of sheep, to rows of pearls upon a mantle of green velvet.

Thus they rode forward, till the way wound along the banks of the Tagus. On one side the waves reflected the trees which hung over the banks, while on the other the groves deepened into confusion, and spread into a forest. A thousand insects circled in the sunbeams, or skimmed the curling waves; and the fishes in wanton sport showed their flashing sides above the less glittering waters.

Amused by the harmony of romantic scenery, and looking forward to the meeting of friendship and affection, they seemed scarcely to have left Madrid, when the red rays of the declining sun warned them of the evening's approach. They rode along the banks of the river by the way, where the impending boughs almost touched the chaise. A sudden plunge into the water roused them from their pleasing reflections by an emotion of alarm, and stopping the chaise, Fernando alighted, and hurried to the spot to give his assistance, if assistance should be wanted.

A female was struggling in the waves; her hair and her garments floated loose upon the waters, and Fernando could not decide, from any appearance near him, whether she had fallen in by accident, or thrown herself in by design. He did not wait to consider, the danger was pressing, and he had no claim but that of humanity to listen to. He tore off his upper garments and unloosing his sword, instantly plunged into the water; and being skilled in all the exercises which became a soldier and a man, he bore her triumphantly to the shore before his servant had time to dismount and lend him assistance.

Selina had quitted the chaise, and when her anxiety for the danger of Fernando ceased, she had leisure to make observations. The wretched object of their attention was black with suppressed circulation. Selina unloosed her garments, that the returning pulsations might freely beat. Around her neck was suspended, by a curious chain of twisted gold and silver wire, the portrait of a nobleman.

Fernando examined the countenance, which was fine, with an air of grandeur in the whole expression. "Surely," said he, "I have seen a person something resembling this, but where, I know not." In turning the portrait, he discovered a secret spring, which he touched, and opening it, a ring, set round with emeralds, fell upon the ground. The words, *Tavara Padilla*, in gold letters, caught his eye. "Is it possible," said he, "this can ever have been the picture of Don Padilla? How much has time and familiarity with vice changed him?"

Selina took up the ring which contained also the initials of Padilla, and the stranger coming fast to her senses they replaced the portrait. After many long-drawn sighs, she raised her eyes upon the face of Selina, which was bent over her in the attitude of benevolence relieving misery. She seemed to shudder and shrink within herself. "Great Heaven!" muttered she, "is it possible?"

"What possible?" said Fernando. "What do you wish?"

"Nothing," answered she faintly; "only leave me here to die. I am an unworthy wretch, and the light of the sun will blast me."

"She is delirious," said Selina. "We will take her into our carriage, she will perhaps live till we reach the Marquis of Denia's."

"Oh! no, no," cried she, struggling to rise; "let me not see his face. He will kill me with a frown. I beseech you let me die here."

Her head rested upon her knees, and her flowing tresses dropping with water, hung down, covering her face; her whole appearance was deplorable in the extreme, and Selina wiped away the tear of commiseration. After much entreaty, she consented to their disposal; and being drenched with wet, the servants rode forward at a rapid rate. All the arguments of Fernando could not prevail on this unhappy creature to enter the marquis's presence; and when they reached the palace, she was delivered over to the care of Raolo.

The Marquis of Denia was wholly ignorant of the transactions of the last night at Madrid, the most part of which he had passed in attending to the narrative of old Gonzalez, and the morning found Virginia

so much better, that he looked forward once more to happiness.

He had slightly learned from Antonio that he had a prospect of certainly liberating Almira, and he had offered his house as a safe protection from the first resentment of Padilla. These thoughts were uppermost while he watched by the side of the sleeping Virginia; and when the servant announced the arrival of a gentleman and lady, who particularly requested his presence alone, his fancy ran forward to Antonio and Almira.

He left Virginia to the care of the maternal housekeeper, and framing a compliment to his friend on his success, and to Almira on her courage, he followed the servant to the door of the sitting-chamber, which he opened himself, bidding the servant retire.

The marquis when he entered stood still, con-founded with inexpressible surprise. Had a spirit from the dead arisen before him, or fire darted beneath his feet, his astonishment could not have been greater. He beheld his dearest friend and former companion, whom he had long believed dead, standing in the middle of the room, holding the hand of a young lady, whose features instantly reminded him of the portrait they had found the night when the Moorish ruins sheltered them from the storm.

The lady was dressed in a style of great magnificence, presenting a figure irresistibly beautiful. Her drawers were of the finest white satin, touched with silver edgings; her slippers were of green morocco, and round her waist was an elegant Persian sash, fastened with a pearl clasp; her upper vestment was of green satin sprinkled with golden stars, and over her hair a thin caul of green network, and crests of gold were fastened in the manner of her country. Her complexion was a clear mixture of roses and lilies, and her bright eyes were of the darkest hue, sparkling beneath arches that were tinged with alcohol. Her mouth was dimpled with an arch smile, and the contour of her whole face and figure was finish of feminine loveliness, mingled with dignity and grace.

Fernando enjoyed the surprise of the marquis gazing alternately from him to Selina. "Yes," cried he, rushing into his arms, "I guess your thoughts, my dear friend. This is the lady whom I loved before I saw. Nothing less than miracles could have brought us together. Now, my dear friend, we shall be happy; but how is Virginia?"

"She is recovering, I hope," replied the marquis; "but we will not damp the first moments of our meeting." Then taking the hand of Selina, "This lady," said he, "will be an honor to our country, and a blessing to her friends. You are a fortunate fellow, Fernando, and it is well my heart is already engaged."

A conversation the most agreeable ensued, which continued till Fernando, observing that his clothes were wet, begged the marquis to lend him a change. "Meanwhile," said he, "Selina will repeat to you a little adventure we met upon the road." The marquis attended to the narrative with impatience and surprise. "Wretched creature," said he; "can her crimes have driven her to this last resource of despair and guilt. I scarce think myself safe beneath the same roof."

"She was very unwilling to come here," replied Selina; "your name terrified her into agony. You know then who she is?"

"No," answered the marquis. "I suspect that I know her from your description. It was mistaking her that I wounded Virginia. That is a charming portrait you wear, Selina, but it is not that of Fernando."

Selina smiled. "Your suspicion," said she, "deserves to be held in ignorance, and I do not know that I ought to make this discovery to you in the absence of Fernando; but if he is displeased, he must impute it to the fault of our sex. This is the picture of Count Fernandez."

The marquis changed color at mention of a name which had been united with so much of supernatural incident that it recalled images the most unpleasant to his mind.

"You are amazed," continued Selina, "but your surprise will not decrease, when I tell you I am his daughter, by the Lady Zidana."

"Is it true, without a miracle," cried the marquis, "you are that infant daughter whom we supposed murdered by a barbarous policy? You are the sister of Almira, and the heiress of the Granada estates, which have been so many years unclaimed? Don Padilla will not be overjoyed at your unexpected return."

"It will be unexpected, I believe, by him," answered Selina; "but my whole life has hitherto been a chain of surprise, nor have I experienced the least since my arrival in Madrid."

There was so much of grief in the last sentence, that the marquis was at a loss to account for it. "I hope," said he, "you have not met with anything unpleasant since you arrived. I am certain your sister Almira, if the restriction of a convent had permitted, would have rejoiced in clasping you to her bosom. Good heavens! Selina, you weep—sure no accident has happened?"

Selina broke into tears, unable to reply. "Let me comfort you," cried the marquis, after a moment's pause; "I now guess, you have been at the Convent of Dominicans, and you have not found your sister; but that need not alarm you. My friend, the Marquis de los Velos, with whom I expect to see here every hour, is a nobleman of honor."

"This is torture insufferable," cried Selina, giving way to a flood of tears. "Oh, marquis, do not kill me by speaking thus. Alas! you have not then heard—you know not—but my sister is dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed the marquis, starting from his seat, trembling, yet doubting the reality of what he heard; "you must be under some terrible mistake."

"Oh, that I were," replied Selina, as Fernando entered the room.

"I am checked," said the marquis, while the color



forsook his cheeks; "but it is true, Fernando? Is Antonio killed? Tell me the extent of what I tremble to hear."

"He lives," replied Fernando, "but he is a prisoner in the Inquisition. Our unhappy sister has too surely fallen, and that by the hands of her father."

"How long shall justice sleep?" cried the marquis, with a gloomy frown.

"On this subject be silent," returned Fernando, laying his hand on Albert's arm; "the thunder at this moment rolls over his head. Now, my dear friend, introduce us to Virginia."

"It must be without detail, then," replied the marquis; "her wound is yet unclosed, and agitation may retard her cure."

"It is most singular," observed Fernando, "that these sisters should, all of them, within the space of forty-eight hours, at a distance wide of each other, and in situations that might have insured safety, run the hazard of a violent death. It seems as if fate were drawing to a climax. My Selina, here, did not escape the malign influence of the stars that hung over the house of Padilla; but, being less connected, has escaped unhurt. We were hurrying along the road from Toledo, and as the night came on, I was apprehensive we might incur hazard as we approached the metropolis, to prepare for which, I drew my pistols from a cloak-bag, one of the strings of which catching the lock, the pistol fired, and the bullet went through Selina's veil."

"You have often spoken to me," said Selina, smiling through her tears, "on the folly of believing so much as we do in fatality; but tell me by what other name you would call these incidents which have brought three sisters so near to death by the hands of their lovers. You had nearly destroyed me in preparing to defend me, the marquis has wounded Virginia in a blind haste, and Antonio has caused the death of Almira by disguising her in his own habit. Let me now visit my only sister, and I will endeavor to supply the loss she has received in Almira."

The marquis desired that she would defer that duty till the morning, as he feared the surprise might be too much for Virginia; at the same time, he observed, that her own fatigue called upon her to take repose. "As to Fernando and myself," said he, "we will spend the hours together; we have much to discourse upon, and it is no new thing for us to pass the night in watching." He then called Raolo, and gave him in charge to prevent the escape of the wretched woman, whose name Raolo informed him was Berenice, and at the same time to supply her with every refreshment.

Selina, at the persuasion of the marquis, consented to defer her intended introduction till the morning, provided she might be allowed the satisfaction of taking a look at her while she slept.

When Fernando and Albert were left alone, a thousand inquiries and congratulations took place, and it was not till after Fernando had related his adventures on the preceding night at Madrid, that the marquis could attend patiently to the narrative of his adventures, since their separation on the wild mountains of Sierra Morena.

#### THE ADVENTURES OF FERNANDO DE COELLO.

On the day that we parted company on the tops of the mountains, I resolved, as I traveled on the way, immediately to return to the environs of Montillo, to examine that spot, by the banks of the river, which had been so wonderfully pointed out to your memory. My mind was too busy with its own reflections to regard the road, and I struck down one which certainly would not have been an object of choice; it was so dreary and so dangerous, that I was roused from my reflections to attend to my safety. It carried us, however, some miles nearer to Tolosa, but wholly wide of the Castle of Montillo.

The design I had entertained, I was now obliged to postpone, receiving, on my arrival at headquarters, an order to march my troops immediately back to Grenada, where I should receive further information. I was surprised at this order, which I was not the less obliged to obey, and again I had the satisfaction of traversing that delightful province. I should have taken a more minute survey of the Moorish ruin had we remained but one day in the city; but the troops that were to join us, were already assembled, and we continued our route to Malaga, through a country of romance. Vines and orange groves spread over the hills, and the remains of Moorish and Gothic antiquity would have afforded me perpetual amusement, had not the rapidity of our march precluded delay.

At Malaga I learned that our commands were to proceed to Ceuta, in Barbary, which place had been so long besieged by the Moors, that their camp had arisen into a village, and the desert for some miles round into a garden. Their preparations of late had been more vigorous, and it was judged necessary to supply the garrison with an immediate reinforcement. My troops were quartered at the old castle, and two days were allowed us to provide necessaries for our absence and change of country.

In the evening of our arrival, the first object of my attention was to write you an account of my situation, but this letter never reached you from a singular accident. The subject which ever preyed upon my mind and engaged all my thoughts, distasted to me the common recreations of life. Whether it were fatality, or a species of madness, I know not; but the impression of that lovely portrait was never to be effaced from my imagination, and had it been a real object, I could not have esteemed it more.

I frequently rambled into some lone spot, far from my companions, that I might gaze upon my secret treasure. I had written my letter nearly to the bottom, when I broke off to enjoy the beauties of a cloudless sky, and having unsettled my fancy, by reflections on the folly of my passions, I resolved to take a walk along the rocky shores of the Mediterranean, propos-

ing at my return to finish my epistle, and give you an account of a ramble you would have been happy in sharing.

Quitting the castle, I struck along the lonely borders of the sea, wholly employed in a long train of reflection. The regular dashing of the gentle waves upon the sands and the rocks, had a sound so melancholy that reveries of the profoundest nature crept over me.

I wandered forward till the city, its inhabitants, and its confusion, were wholly lost, and solemn silence hung upon the night. A light gale at intervals sighed along the beach, but the bosom of the waves slept in peace, and the eye wandered at large over their vast extent, bounded only by imagination. I sat down upon a fragment of rock facing the east, the evening star sparkled in the clear firmament, and a pale semi-circular arch, drawn from the surface of the ocean, proclaimed the rising moon.

I observed the slow advancement of its motion, till the first ray of its silver edge struck upon the surface of the waters, and danced, as it were, over the gentle quivering of the waves. Every breath of air seemed suspended in silence, and the sublimity of light and shade raised the mind into regions of its own creation. As the moon arose, the distant objects reflected its beams, and a few vessels were seen to sleep upon the waters, like sea fowls bathing their plumes in the refreshing element. I leaned my head upon my hands to contemplate the wonders of creation, and lose myself in its pleasures. A sweet strain of rising harmony stole upon my ear. I listened, and the melody seemed to increase from a distance in soft and airy tones, unbroken by any zephyr that moved.

I listened in delight and astonishment, for no sounds like these had ever touched my soul; they seemed to proceed over waters, but the minstrels were invisible; and I fancied the nymphs of the ocean, or the syrens of the early ages were gathered around me. The shores of this ocean are famed in poetry and romance, as the choice of superior spirits, and I gave way to the delightful delusion which enraptured my mind. I was, if I may so express myself, entranced with an unknown pleasure, when the sound swelled into a full chorus, mingled with harmonious voices; and I could distinguish these words, sung with an air, so altogether different from human composition, that my memory could not forget them:

Gallant and gaily  
On the waves riding,  
Spirits of Ocean  
Come to my call;  
Nightly and daily  
Thro' the deep gliding,  
Swift as the motion  
Ye circle this ball;  
Warble a chorus,  
Passing before us,

Skimming the green, when the moonbeams sleep,  
Hollow shells sounding,  
Echo rebounding,

Charms into pleasure the turbulent deep.

This was all I could clearly distinguish, the invisible troop passing away upon the trackless deep, and sinking by degrees, the sounds were wholly lost in distance; leaving me wrapped in wonder, and that sort of pleasure the mind enjoys, after contemplating any object superior to itself.

It was impossible voluntarily to interrupt so pleasing a train of thought, and I had some faint hope to catch again the celestial warblings. The moon moved in majestic silence through the starry heavens, and I arose when the breezes of midnight began to steal along the darkening shore.

A distant sound of oars dipping in the water passed upon the wind, and I paused a moment to see if the vessel was visible; but the point of a projecting rock hid it from my view. I began to think of making the best of my way back to Malaga, when again my curiosity was excited by the vessel turning the point, and rowing directly towards me.

By the shade in which I stood, I had the advantage of overlooking without being seen, and I remained, without moving, under a hanging cliff. The galley brought to, within a little distance of the shore, and a boat was dispatched to the land. In a few minutes it struck upon the shore, and four men, supporting a large heavy trunk between them, advanced upon the beach. They halted within about thirty paces of where I stood, and letting their burden to the ground, three of them began to dig a hole in the sands, while the fourth wrung his hands, and lamented his ill fortune in the accents of the greatest grief, and in a language I judged to be Moorish.

My curiosity was strongly excited by this strange incident; I wished much to learn what was in the chest; but feared to move lest I should create an alarm which might be unpleasant to myself. I now examined the men and the vessel with more attention, and could no longer doubt their being Moorish cruisers; and while I debated how I should best act, they had opened a considerable pit, the chest appeared heavy and with difficulty they let it down with ropes; while my curiosity became so strong, that I had no little struggle to listen to the suggestions of prudence.

The man I had seen bewailing himself, then threw himself prone upon the sands in an agony of distress while the others, without once speaking or noticing his grief, continued to fill up the pit. A fusée fired from the galley alarmed them and leaving the work, they seemed attempting to persuade the mourner to accompany them; but he appeared deaf to their entreaties, motioning them away. They then seized him, and by force carried him to the boat, rowing immediately from the shore, in too much haste to carry away their tools.

I waited only till they were under sail, then running

to the spot, I examined it with care, and taking up a spade began to throw up the sand, that I might satisfy myself as much as possible in this strange adventure. The pit they had dug in the yielding sands was large and deep that they might not carry off the chest, and I was soon beneath the level of the shore. I labored with a strength supplied by wonder and curiosity. I did not suppose it was any species of plunder they had so carefully concealed, that might have been carried away with facility and would not have excited those transports of grief I had witnessed: I rather believed it the body of some person they had robbed, or a comrade killed in a fray.

With difficulty I cleared the sand from the cover of the chest. I raised the lid (for the whole was much too heavy for me to remove in that situation), and found a considerable folding of linen cloth which filled up the chest. This I removed, and by the pale beams of the moon, discovered the face of a human figure, extremely beautiful and very young. Though I had expected to find a dead body, yet I had supposed it some elderly man; and my horror was not a little increased on turning a fine painted shawl, which lay upon the breast, to find that this beautiful creature was a female.

#### CHAPTER XVIII.

I stood transfixed with astonishment, gazing upon the features which yet retained sufficient expression to excite regret, when I heard on a sudden the sound of voices over me, and looking up beheld the same men returning to finish their labor. I was too much surprised to think of resistance; and I feared that in the first heat of their passion I might fall beneath the cimeters which flashed in circles over my head.

The epithets of "Dog of a Christian!" convinced me of the truth of my first suspicions. The person whom I had observed in so much grief interposed in my favor, insisting that they should first hear my intentions; and distinguishing, by my uniform, that I was an officer in the army, he ordered that I should be taken on board as a prisoner. This debate took place while I remained beneath them in the grave, in which situation I had no reason to expect my life, and might think any condition a favor.

While they were leading me down to the boat with their cimeters within an inch of my throat, I could not but accuse myself of indiscreet curiosity; and I turned my eyes with a melancholy look towards the country I was thus torn from, with very little hope of soon visiting it again. Having pinioned me upon deck, they loosened the sails to the wind and stood away to the sea. I had never before been upon this unstable element, and though every object was new, my mind permitted me not to enjoy the satisfaction variety can give.

My eyes turned towards the receding shores, and I sighed as the indistinct objects vanished from my sight. My situation was far from pleasant; and entreaties for the liberty of only walking the deck were unattended. I now had every reason to fear that I should be treated as a slave by these uncivilized people, who regarded not the laws of nations, which ought to be preserved religiously inviolable in the midst of war. I requested to speak with the captain of the corsair, but the rough mariners returned my entreaties with abuse, threatening me by their looks and gestures.

In the morning the captain came upon the deck, and I judged from his air and the grief on his countenance, that he was the person who had superintended the strange funeral I had witnessed. A violent debate ensued between him and several of the crew; and from their signs I had no doubt but I was the subject. The captain seemed to endeavor to conciliate them, but they became more furious; and at length, to preserve the crew from mutiny, he delivered me over to their wishes—himself standing by to preserve me from personal violence.

In a moment I was plundered and stripped; and my arms being bound fast, the picture I so highly valued was torn from my neck by a brutal wretch, notwithstanding he saw the concern it gave me. The captain, who stood over them with a mixture of shame and indignation in his countenance, was touched by my earnest entreaties for the portrait; and possibly, supposing it to be that of some chosen lady, he insisted upon having it from the sailor, who, very reluctantly, complied with the demand.

He gazed upon it with the air of a man struck with surprise, which I attributed to the Moorish habit. He commanded them to release me, in a voice which signified his resolution to be obeyed; at the same time he clapped his hand on a pistol, which he wore in his belt, to enforce obedience. The sailors more readily complied, as they had plundered me of everything, and stripped me to the shirt.

"Christian," said the captain in Spanish, "by what means gained you the possession of this picture? Whom does it resemble?"

I replied, with respect, that it was a story of some length, and not to be told by a person stripped as I was, upon a public deck.

"Right," replied he; "follow me."

I attended him into his cabin; and after putting on a Moorish dress, and receiving some refreshment, I related to him the means by which it came to my possession, and how much the beauty had struck my fancy.

He seemed to hear all I said with an earnest attention. The name of Don Padilla made him color with rage.

"Spaniard," said he, when I ceased speaking, "take back your picture. It is the likeness of my own sister, Lady Zidana. I was very young when the barbarous edict of Philip banished my whole family, except that sister, who would not forsake her husband and child, to accompany her brother Hyraddin and myself into exile. I have never been able to learn with certainty the fate of herself and her child, but from report; and I have no doubt the hand which destroyed



her husband, Count Ferendez, would not slacken in removing her, when fancy or passion should have changed."

I dared not in our first conversation touch upon the strange adventures I had witnessed on the shores of Malaga; but the more I became acquainted with Mustapha, the greater was my astonishment at what seemed so barbarous an action.

Mustapha, who dwelt upon the water three parts of his time, retained his favorite mistress in a small cabin; nor would his jealousy or delicacy permit me her sight. He never mentioned her but with the greatest reserve; and he seemed visibly agitated when any hint tended towards her. From which I judged that some difference had happened between them—being ignorant of the customs of the East.

We pursued our voyage for several days without falling in with any vessel, and the sailors, angry at their disappointment, and dissatisfied with the favors bestowed upon me, being obliged to refund their plunder, began to show their disapprobation in murmurs of revenge.

Mustapha was not blind to this disposition of his crew, and cautioned me to be upon my guard. This precaution was not without necessity.

On the second night after receiving it, I retired to my own cabin after finishing a game of chess, of which the Moors are fond to extravagance. The tediousness of the game had wearied my mind, and laying down in my clothes I quickly fell asleep. I dreamed that I was in the same road where I first beheld the spirit of Count Ferendez; I now fancied the same figure approached, running with a drawn saber in his hand. "Fernando! Fernando!" cried he, as he ran "grasp your sword, and defend yourself! Awake! awake!"

The noise of his shouting awakened me in reality, and I found my sword unsheathed and grasped in my hand. I was wondering at this singular circumstance, when I heard a light step, and the ship heeling, a slight slip on boards. The cabin was totally dark, and I remained still, my saber firmly grasped in my hand ready to strike. The person drew near, evidently constraining his breath, lest he might awaken me.

He approached and stood over me. I could distinguish the raising of his arm, no doubt to plunge his poniard into me. At that moment I darted my sword point before me, which he received in his throat as he was stooping over me. A faint sigh was all that he uttered as he fell upon the flooring; and starting up, I began to examine as well as the darkness would permit, the person of this assassin.

My next consideration was, the resentment I had to fear from his comrades; and I doubted whether Mustapha himself would have power to save me from their revenge.

The ruffian yet grasped his poniard in his hand; but his arm, which but a moment before was braced to midnight murder, was now unnerved and passive, and I had no difficulty in taking his weapon, which was one of those Eastern daggers whose wound is incurable.

I resolved to hazard the displeasure of Mustapha by waking him, if I could trace the way to his cabin in the dark. To defend myself from any opposition I might meet, I retained my sword in one hand, and the dagger in the other; having first secured my pistols in my sash, and groping my way in silence, I advanced towards the captain's cabin.

A confused sort of noise ran between decks, and the clash of swords reached me; I flew forward, not doubting but the crew had mutinied, and found Mustapha fighting like a tiger at bay amidst six or seven of his crew. He was covered with blood, which flowed from several wounds; and fearing that these were mortal, in which case my own death was near and inevitable, I resolved not to die tamely.

Animated by the resistance of Mustapha, I became fired with his ardor, and fell upon the nearest with irresistible force; the poniard I held in my left hand, while I pressed forward with my right, did great execution; and I had already stretched three upon the cabin floor, amidst streams of blood, when Mustapha's foot slipping on the glutinous boards, he fell; and a Moor leaping upon him, raised his arm to cleave his skull with an ax. He was too far distant to be reached by my sword, if I could have broken through those who opposed me. I stretched out my left hand with the poniard, to keep them at bay, and dropping my sword, which was fastened to my wrist by a chain, I seized one of my pistols, and by the greatest miracle, the bullet went through the ruffian's head, and he fell to the ground, giving Mustapha opportunity to rise.

This pistol was the first which had been fired; it alarmed the whole ship's crew; and several not having been in the secret, crowded forward to the cabin to the relief of their captain, and the fight became general and bloody. The reinforcement we had received enabled us to clear the cabin. The mutinous crew drew up their forces at the mouth of the hatchway, intending, at least, to take the command of the ship.

In this situation, desperate measures were alone equal to the danger. The stairs to the deck were so narrow, that it would have been easy to kill every man who should have attempted to enter. A barrel of gunpowder stood in one corner of the cabin, and ordering it to be placed at the foot of the stairs, Mustapha knocked off the top, and calling to the men who stood ready to fire upon anyone who should appear, he bade them fire away, if they wanted to be blown into the air; at the same time he swore, by Mahomet, if they did not return quickly to their duty, and surrender their arms, he would fire the powder, and leave them only the wreck to carry them to Tetuan; where they would all be impaled on red hot stakes.

This threat, and their knowledge of the man who uttered it, together with the sight of the powder, which was actually placed where a spark would have destroyed them in a moment, produced its effect. A parley ensued; and, after mutual promise of oblivion, peace was restored.

In addition to seven or eight killed, many were severely wounded in this affray; and Mustapha was so much exhausted with exertion and loss of blood, that I had many doubts of his life.

He expressed in strong terms his acknowledgement of the services I had rendered him, and from that hour I began to be received as a friend. I had not banished from my memory the singular event I had witnessed on the shores of Malaga; and the more I became acquainted with the character of Mustapha, the less capable did he appear either of unnecessary violence or treachery; but whenever I ventured to touch upon this point, his countenance overcast, and he evidently struggled with some bitter reflections.

His wounds slowly mended, and as we drew near Tetuan (having cruised some weeks without success), he began to speak of the country with satisfaction.

"Yet," said he, "though the charms of this country are great, I feel not the same pleasure in approaching it I should have done, but for an unfortunate event, to the sad conclusion of which you were witness. I should have been pleased to introduce you to my brother Hyraddin; but after what has happened, I dare never see him more. His castle is some leagues up the country, and I shall remain at Tetuan till I refit for another cruise."

This was the first time he had himself led to the subject of many of my reflections; and I determined to hazard something to develop the mystery.

"You have mentioned an incident which has long excited my surprise," answered I; "and I fear that some accident was the cause."

"No," replied he, "had it been an accident, I should have had reason to excuse myself; but it was the effect of a blind passion, and will forever sting me with unavailing remorse. The truth is unknown even to my ship's crew; but to you, Fernando, who have saved my life, I will explain this secret which poisons my existence."

"Zaide is the name of the lady whom I have chosen for her wit as the companion of my voyages; but during the last trip she remained at my brother Hyraddin's. When everything was ready for our sailing, about two months since, she came to Tetuan, bringing with her several presents from my brother and a beautiful slave, which, she informed me, had been given her by Zulma, my brother's favorite wife."

"From the first day of our voyage, I remarked a certain intelligence between Zaide and this slave, whom she called Hassan; and my mind became tainted with tormenting suspicions. We had been some time at sea, and though the favors she bestowed upon Hassan excited my strongest suspicions, yet I detected no positive facts, which might confirm the frenzy which stung me."

"The weather we had met had been unruffled by a storm; but at this time we had encountered a high gale of wind, which blew us fast upon the shores of Spain; and for the time of its duration, our vessel was very much agitated. The duty of my station required me to be upon deck, and after several hours' labor, I returned suddenly to my cabin, where I found Hassan with his arms twined around the waist of Zaide, while her head reclined upon his shoulder."

"They were too much engaged in conversation to observe my approach; and something tender that was said by one of them, was answered by a kiss."

"My blood ran boiling through my veins and I have wondered with myself that I did not pierce them both at once; but excess of passion produces a calm. I silently withdrew in a delirium of rage; and meditated for some plan of excruciating revenge, that should search for every nerve and wring it with agony."

"From this I soon turned to enjoy, in my then state of mind, a more refined mode of revenge. 'He shall expire gradually before my eyes,' said I to myself. 'She shall see that roseate color fade away, and his meaning eyes sink into inanimation; his voice shall fail him in expressions of tenderness; and in place of a body scorching in the flames of passion, she shall clasp in her arms an icy and motionless lump of clay.' He shall then be laid in her bed; he shall be the partner of her voyage; and, when we reach land, I will confine her in a chamber with this object of loathing, and daily shall she watch the progress of putrescence."

"I hastened to execute this infernal project, blinded by an unaccountable frenzy. I concealed my suspicions; and proposing to regale after the late storm, I ordered no one to interrupt us in the great cabin during the entertainment. Zaide had accustomed Hassan to sit with us at table, under pretense of his youth, and this was amongst the first things which excited my suspicions."

"During the feast I infused some drops of a subtle and incurable poison into the sherbet of Hassan. I gazed upon his features, and involuntarily felt pity for his youth and beauty; but the caresses I had witnessed arose as a cloud over my senses, and steelled my heart to pity."

"He raised the cup to his mouth. 'I will drink,' said he, 'the health of my late Master Hyraddin; as you have told me the people of Europe do.'"

"At the name of my brother, I felt a sudden glow flush over my face, and I made an effort to stretch out my hand, to prevent him taking the fatal contents, while he drank the health of Hyraddin, but he had already swallowed more than sufficient."

"The effects were not immediate; and Zaide remarked to me how much liquor improved the sparkle of the eye. A flash of fury darted from mine at these words, which seemed to be an insult upon my easiness; and I gazed upon them with rising satisfaction, at the idea that my revenge was begun."

"Take a glass of this Jerusalem wine," said Zaide to me. "I have a secret to tell you, which you may as well know now as later. Confess, Mustapha, that you have been jealous of this little slave!" At the same time she placed her hand upon his shoulder.

"'Confusion, madam,' cried I starting up. 'Do you injure and insult me too?'"

"In place of answering me directly, she broke out into a fit of laughing, which raised my fury into raving."

"I entreat your pardon," said she, when she feared she had proceeded too far. "You shall know our secret. This little Hassan is your niece, Zara."

"These fatal words deprived me, for some moments, of all sensation. My ideas whirled in dreadful confusion; and closing my eyes, I sank forward with my head upon the table. Zaide uttered a cry at this unexpected incident; but her attention was diverted from me, by the sudden flushing and paleness of Zara, whose heart swelled and panted with the palpitations of death."

"I raised my head, aroused by the cries of Zaide. My two slaves ran into the cabin—I should have sacrificed them in my frenzy, if they had not precipitately fled. Holy Prophet! what were the feelings of my soul at that moment? The flowing ringlets of Zara's fine hair fell down behind her turban and the robe she had unfortunately assumed being open to give her breath, her fine neck and heaving breast too fully proved the truth of Zaide's assertion."

"What horrors spread over me, when I saw all her lovely features distorted with pain, and knew that no antidote on earth had power to save her. I cursed my own folly, and the strange disguise which had led to it; and scarcely could the tears and lamentations of Zaide prevent me from committing violence on myself. Zara every moment lost some portion of her life; her utterance failed, her senses were bewildered, her limbs were convulsed and the powerful drug shook every nerve through her frame."

"No words can express the agonies that rent my soul when I beheld her expire. 'Wretched Zaide!' cried I; 'see the effects of your concealment of the person of my niece! who shall account to my brother for this event? Now will we have to mourn the loss of both his children.'"

"'Alas!' replied Zaide, weeping bitterly, 'it was her ardent desire, if possible, to see Spain, which her father had so often described to her as a land of paradisaical luxury; and she had some hope that chance might lead her to discover her lost brother Ali. She knew that neither Hyraddin nor yourself would have entered into her project, and I have unfortunately been the instrument of her destruction.'"

"I called in the slaves, and gave orders that the body should be laid in a chest, with perfumes and spices to preserve it till our return to Tetuan; but the superstitious mariners insisted that some misfortune would befall us, and thus I was obliged to make the nearest shore, as I could not think of committing to the devouring fishes so precious a body. We concealed from the slaves that Zara was other than the slave Hassan, and became a witness of her irregular interment."

While I consoled with Mustapha, who shed tears as he recounted the good qualities of his niece, we were interrupted by a sudden shout upon deck, and a hurrying noise, which gave us some apprehensions that a new disturbance had arisen. We flew upon deck with our sabers drawn, and soon learned the cause of the alarm by perceiving a large Spanish vessel between us and the shore."

She bore down upon us, and, from her size, left us no chance of escaping; she being a ship of the line, and our vessel only a galley with oars.

"I shall now," said Mustapha to me, "have to depend on you in my turn for protection. Fate is frowning upon me, and I am willing to suffer that I may atone for my own excesses; but I entreat you, by our friendship, to protect the unhappy Zaide from insult."

I had scarce time to make my assurances before the long boat of the man-of-war came alongside, and our colors having been struck at their first shot, they boarded us without any opposition.

The Spaniards, in the triumph of so easy a conquest, began to exult, and to commit several outrages beneath the honor of the Spanish nation. I represented to them that tumult ill became true honor; but this was not the moment of reason. I hastened back to the cabin, Mustapha having surrendered, and for the first time beheld Zaide, to whom I offered my protection. I conducted her, shedding tears, upon deck, and demanded in a tone of firmness to speak to the superior officer. I instantly knew him to have been a person I had formerly served, and who, in fact, owed his station to my interests.

This was a fortunate circumstance, as his authority and my representations restored the sailors to their senses; and the galley being run alongside the Spaniard we went on board, and were introduced to the commander. My influence procured a separate cabin for Mustapha and his lady; for whatever I might place to the account of gratitude, I could not forget that he was brother to the lady whose portrait had so much engaged me.

A fair wind wafted us to the little harbor of Ceuta, where I found my troops, and our meeting was alike unexpected. The duty they had to perform was harassing; the Moors seeming resolved to finish a siege which, for duration, rivaled that of Troy. I procured Mustapha the freedom of the town; but having been accustomed to roving, and that upon an ever-varying element, the confinement of the fort preyed upon his health."

I determined to use my endeavors to procure his exchange or escape; but the closeness of the siege, and the vigilance of the garrison, rendered it nearly impossible to quit the place. My situation as captain of a regiment allowed me many liberties, when my soldiers were on duty; but then the abuse of those liberties was equal to a forfeiture of a parole of honor; and on that point friendship had no power."

I examined, day after day, the fortifications. At a distant part from where my men were stationed, I observed a part of the works which were old, and appeared



easy to be scaled. A solitary sentinel kept watch. I entered into conversation with the man on guard, and learned that he had been three years in the fort.

"It has been my lot," said he, after other discourse, "many a time to trace this rampart backward and forward: the winds have whistled around me, and the lightnings have fallen at my feet; but all this was nothing to what I suffered the last time I was on duty at this station."

"What was that, my friend?" inquired I; "were you taken ill upon the post?"

"No," replied he, looking cautiously around him. "I was walking along this old wall, and looking over the distant country by moonlight, when I saw an old soldier of the hussars coming slowly forward. It was near midnight, and I knew there was no soldier of that description in the fort, which made me wonder the more."

"Well, well," said I "who was it?"

"That you shall hear in due time," answered he, looking round through the darkness of night. "I thought to be sure it was some spy, or some soldier newly arrived, and was going to challenge him, when he suddenly stopped, facing me, and I perceived round his helmet a circle of blue flame. I should have supposed it the effect of lightning, which often plays upon the point of my bayonet, but no clouds hung above us; and I instantly knew it to be the Devil."

"By what mark?" said I.

"What could be plainer?" returned he. "I saw the dancing fire play round his helmet; I smelt the burning sulphur, which I am told is to him like perfume; and his frightful countenance fixed me to where I stood. He moved by me without my having power to utter a word. I saw him advance and descend into the well, which is in the angle of yonder bastion; and I had no doubt but it was Beelzebub, coming to spy out for his friends, the Moors."

"Has any other person," said I, "seen this phantom? Did you examine the well afterwards? Are you certain you were not deceived?"

He was piqued at my doubts; and to confirm the truth of his story, added several ridiculous and absurd circumstances, which shook my belief in the whole. I learned, however, that two of his comrades had seen the same appearance; though, he assured me, they would not speak to any body about it, for fear of being laughed at.

My curiosity was aroused at this incident; I took the names of the comrades, with the design to search the truth of this story. I questioned those soldiers apart on the following day, endeavoring to dive into the jungle if there was one; but their answers were so reserved, that they only served to confirm me in the fact.

I had a desire to be witness myself of this incident, but they started a thousand difficulties. One of them observed, that he believed it to be the specter of some soldier, whose skeleton laid in the well. These soldiers refused to have any concern in my proposed project of speaking to the spirit; and I resolved to apply to Francisco, who seemed to have none of that mystery about him.

I repaired to his lodgings, and learned that the night had passed away without alarm. Again he repeated to me every particular of the dress and manner of this singular personage.

On the fourth night it would again be the turn of Francisco to watch on the battlements. "Keep your secret till then," said I; "your comrades do not circulate the story. We will endeavor to find out the truth; it is most likely some fellow who is playing tricks for the sake of a ramble by moonlight."

I parted from him, and hastened to inform Mustapha of the incident. "What prevents you personating this old hussar?" said I; "you will pass without question into the well, which I have examined, and which is admirably adapted for concealment till you find opportunity to escape into the camp. When there, you may easily find means to ransom Zaide, who shall remain under my protection."

"Will it not be sacrilege," said he, "to take upon me the guise of a spirit? Will not some mischief attend me? And how can I imitate the sulphurous flame around my head?"

"That we may omit," answered I. "I see nothing to prevent success. I will be with the sentinel, and prevent pursuit. Fortune or fate has suggested the means of your flight; and pointed out to you the path that must lead you to liberty."

"But if I am to remain here," answered he, "all I can do will be without effect."

"And if you are not to remain here," replied I, "the smallest effort will be sufficient."

This fine argument convinced him; and, after settling some particulars relative to Zaide, he agreed to follow my directions.

## CHAPTER XIX.

I prepared a hussar's dress, which I had some difficulty to procure; and having dressed Mustapha, I counsel him to practice the attitude he was to observe, in order to inspire the greater fear. He was much concerned at leaving Zaide behind him; though he no longer felt for her that ardor of attachment which had burned in his bosom before the unfortunate adventure of Zars. So dangerous is it for women to tamper with a passion so easily raised, and so transient in its nature.

I had no doubt of being able to procure her a conveyance to Tetuan; at which place he proposed to meet her, if he did not before find means for her ransom.

The night at length arrived, and, having made every preparation, I hastened before him to the rampart. It was dark, the moon being in the wane, and Francisco was not a little satisfied at my arrival.

"I counted the tedious minutes, Mastro," said he;

"the wind chatters on the battlements, and I begin to fear the appearance of this dead hussar."

"Had he been alive, you might have had more reason to fear him."

"No, no," replied he, standing firm; "it is because he is dead that I fear him. I do think there is a storm brewing in the air. Well, let it blow; I do not value a tempest."

"Nor I," answered I; "soldiers should be invulnerable to wind and weather. At what hour does this specter appear?"

"About midnight. All these wandering beings choose that hour. The noon of night—when all mankind are supposed to be at rest. They do not much love company, I fancy."

"Very likely," answered I.

"Hush," said he, in a low voice, leaning on his arm, and listening to a distant step.

"What do you hear?" said I; "do ghosts tread heavy?"

"I know not," answered he in a whisper; "but listen—I thought I heard a footfall."

We remained silent and listening; the night being too dark to see at any great distance. "Call the watchword," said I, "and fire if you receive no answer."

"Fire," repeated Francisco. "Of what use would that be? I would not quarrel with the spirit. No, no; as my comrades said the other day, 'Let him alone, 'tis as well to have friends every way.' Listen! I am certain a step draws near."

I listened, and felt real anxiety that Mustapha did not appear; beginning to apprehend that his superstitious reverence had overcome his resolution—when I distinguished, from a distance, an advancing step. It was not yet twelve o'clock, but no sound was to be heard in the garrison, except the calling of the sentinels from post to post. The solemnity of the night, as I stood on the ramparts and heard the wind passing by, was sufficient to create images of terror.

Mustapha at last appeared. His motions were majestic and impressive; and he passed by us with a solemn step, preserving silence. The hair of Francisco bristled up, and he seemed fixed to the place with terror, watching the supposed specter as it moved to the spot I had marked, where the descent was easy, and he was soon lost to our view.

"Now will you believe?" said Francisco; "now you have seen with your own eyes? But he had no flame playing round his helmet, and he seemed in my eyes much taller."

"Is it not the same, then?" said I. "Why did you not challenge it?"

"Because I had not power to move—I was riveted to the ground."

I felt something like shame at this expression. It convinced me that what I had heretofore attributed to the beaming power of supernatural appearance, arose, in fact, from excess of terror, which suspended the powers of action in the animal economy.

I stood silent and thoughtful, while these reflections passed over me. Francisco did not attempt to interrupt my reverie, believing that I partook in his fears; and, while he thus stood, the melancholy tones of the castle bell striking twelve, spread upon the silence of midnight, and gave birth to reflections, which are only to be felt in particular situations. I was fast entering into a solemn train of thought, when Francisco suddenly took me by the arm, to rouse me from my reverie.

"Heaven and the Holy Apostles be our guard!" said he; "who could it have been that passed us? Here comes the first specter, with the sulphurous flame around his helmet!"

I turned my head to look along the rampart, and perceived, indeed, the light of a blue steady flame, waving like a faint glory over the helmet of an hussar, such as had been described to me.

The person came slowly forward, and his eyes fixed upon me with a look full of resentment. The complexion was dark, and the features commanding; but there was none of that pallid and death-like expression which dwelt upon the countenance of the wounded spirit of Fernandez, and characterized the inhabitant of the rotten earth.

My surprise, at first, was great, but my reason was not subdued, and, perhaps, from a knowledge of my own secret—I might have a suspicion of others. I stood firm with my eyes fixed upon this appearance. A lowering frown gathered on his brow, but I was not thus to be intimidated, and, drawing my sword, I resolved to have a lunge at this hussar. He stood still at my motion: a misty cloud of sulphurous vapor gathered round him, and completely concealed him from my sight.

I repented my rashness when I beheld this phenomenon. Francisco fell upon the ground, and I remained in uncertainty, while the hussar, enveloped in a cloud of smoke, which left a train behind, moved along the ramparts. He approached the bastion, beneath which was the well where Mustapha lay concealed. Apprehensive for his safety, I roused my resolution and followed.

The figure descended the uneven and broken wall into the well, but stopped a few paces down, confounded at the sight of Mustapha, who stood, with his dark lantern open, beneath some interwoven brambles.

His sudden cry determined me. I followed, sword in hand, down the steep, and so similar were the dresses that for a moment, I scarce knew which was Mustapha, till I perceived the waving flame which played upon the helmet of the hussar.

The stranger no longer found means of evasion, and shuddering at the sight of Mustapha, who appeared to him as rising from the well to punish him for assuming a familiarity with the dead, they stood gazing upon each other in mutual confusion and astonishment.

However my senses might have been deluded, I had no longer reason to doubt the impostor; and making

fiercely at him, with my saber pointed at his throat, vowed instantly to dispatch him if he made the smallest resistance.

"Fernando de Coello," said he, in a firm tone of voice, "I call upon you, in the name of the lady whose picture you wear, to suspend your arm! This moment, it is true, I am in your power; but were you to strike, in two minutes you would be a dead man."

"Impossible!" replied I, not a little confounded at his singular words. "Who are you that boast of such powers?"

"I am he who knows the secrets of your heart. I know the crimes of Doña Padilla; and the fortunes of the Lady Zidana, whose picture you admire."

"Tell me," cried Mustapha, in the greatest impatience, "tell me, I entreat, where I may find that long-lost sister. Is she living or dead?"

"The roses have long since faded from her cheek," said he; "the luster has vanished from her eyes, and the beauty of her perfections is withered."

"Then she is dead!" cried Mustapha. "Fate is unconquerable."

"You play upon us," said I, "by your evasive replies; say, is Lady Zidana living or dead?"

"She lives," replied he. "She resides at my castle; but this is neither the time nor the place for detail. I am Almonzor, the traveling physician you once met with in Spain. I was then traversing the country for intelligence."

"You are then a spy," cried I; "honor will not allow me to suffer you to escape."

"You cannot prevent it," replied he. "Have you not already seen some of the effects I can produce by chemical secrets? I have only to break this small tube of glass, which I hold in my hands, to strike you at my feet. You are young, Fernando, and ignorant of the world; but you will learn experience; and the time may come when you will know me to be a powerful friend. I possess many secrets besides those of chemistry. I will be your guide, Mustapha, to the camp; where you will meet a person you will be glad to see."

"Remember," said I, "that I am here stationed in behalf of my country; and, that, whoever approaches these walls in hostile array, will meet the opposition of my arm."

I took leave of my friend and Almonzor; ascending the ramparts, not a little astonished at the powers of this singular man, who seemed almost to rise above his species. I found Francisco yet lost in a deep swoon. I called to the next guard and had him taken care of.

I took upon myself to arrest the two soldiers, who were in the plot with Almonzor to deliver up the town to the Moors; and the next day they suffered the reward of their treachery, in sight of the enemy's camp.

I procured, with no little difficulty, the freedom of Zaide; and she was sent with a flag of truce to Tetuan. The Moors, finding that their stratagem had been discovered, and the faulty bastion repaired, resolved to try the effects of a general storm.

We had no apprehension of the event, our garrison being chosen men; and we prepared to receive them with alacrity. We knew, by our spies, the day the assault would be attempted.

The morning opened with a fire from three batteries, very ill supplied, and so constructed as to do us little mischief. The martial music sounded along the ramparts, the streaming banners waved and trembled in the wind, and the drums beat to arms. The whole town was in confusion; the infirm, the women and children, uttered cries of terror, and endeavored to hide themselves in places that could have given them no safety. The uproar became universal. The din of arms, the clashing of swords, and the deep thunder of the cannon, mingled with shouts from every side, raised every soldier into a hero, and stifled the voice of pity and humanity.

An irregular but furious crowd pressed forward to storm the walls; rushing upon death more like beasts of the desert than regular trained soldiers, and were swept by ranks into the ditch, which flowed with human blood. Where the scaling-ladders were applied to the walls, and mounted with raging Moors, they were dashed precipitately down the rocks, or smothered in the streams of blood which flowed in the ditches; yet they continued to succeed each other with unabated frenzy.

At the next station to where I was commanding, some daring fellows gained a footing on the battlements, followed by those behind them, like a swarm of bees, without a visible support but by each other. The soldiers fell back, and a cry of victory amongst the assailants at once struck terror into our troops, and animated their own with a ferocity that threatened to bear down coolness and skill.

The governor of the place fortunately arrived when the fate of the garrison depended on a moment. He was supported by a troop of veterans, which had been judiciously reserved for emergency. "Follow me, Fernando," cried he. "Draw off all the men you can spare, and we will drive these barbarians into the ditches."

I felt myself reassured at his speech. I endeavored to inspire my troops with equal confidence, and we marched forward in irresistible array, and in as much order as if we had been upon the parade.

Our engineers brought an eighteen-pounder, loaded with canister shot, to bear upon the rushing crowd, which threw them into confusion. Our men then closed with pikes and bayonets, forming an impenetrable line which turned the stream, broke the mad fury of the attack, and drove them like a flock of sheep over the ramparts. For the few minutes they had been in possession of the wall, they had broken down so much as to make a considerable breach, through which we had to drive the main body backwards upon a pressing crowd, which hemmed them round, and scarce allowed their retreat.



The standard of Mahomet was dipped in blood, and heaps of miserable wretches filled the trenches. Led on by the ardor of conquest, we struck upon their rear, till we found ourselves in the open plain, opposed by a multitude, who again rallied, and turned upon us with fury.

I was debating whether to endeavor to retreat; or fight till a new sortie should be made from the garrison, when a barbarian, mounted on a fine Arabian courser, rushed upon me with a long spear, to fix me to the ground. By a fortunate blow of my saber, I struck the handle of his spear in two, and, tumbling with the force of his thrust upon the ground, I dragged him from his saddle and mounted in his place, waving my hand to my brave soldiers, who rushed forward to support me.

Fresh troops having reinforced us from the garrison, along and bloody engagement ensued, with a variety of success, and dreadful slaughter on both sides. I will not vaunt to you my own exploits; you have witnessed my performance in a field of battle, and this fight was not the least in which I have been engaged.

I found myself insensibly detached from my troops, before I remembered my danger. I looked behind, and saw thickening crowds that cut off my retreat. I grasped the reins firmly in one hand, and striking with the velocity of lightning on every side, my sword flashing through the air winged with death to whoever opposed me, struck a panic into the crowd around; and my generous courser, feeling the ardor of his rider, overthrew and trod down all who attempted to stand in his way. The enemy discharged their pieces behind me, to stay my speed; but, except a slight scratch upon one shoulder by a ball, I escaped without the smallest wound, and found myself in the open country, almost out of sight of the fort of Ceuta.

The battle still roared and raged behind me. A cloud of smoke and dust enveloped the combatants; and I stood still to behold this horrible display of human frenzy. The flashes of the artillery appeared like the dartings of lightning through a heavy sulphurous cloud, and the succeeding roar of the echoing volleys imitated the pealing thunder.

At length the Moors began to give way, and fearing to be overtaken by the crowd, I turned round my courser, flying over the sandy plains, and urging forward, till spent with heat, thirst, and fatigue, I stopped on the banks of a little stream; and listening, like the hunted stag when he has winded the hounds, could distinguish no sounds of approaching tumult, nor perceive the distant clouds of promiscuous confusion spreading in the air, or rolling over the plain.

All was dreary and silent around me. The gliding stream moved, without a wave, over a bed of sand; no flowers enameled its side, or shrub gathered greenness from its waters. Yet to me it appeared adorned with charms; and, sitting down, I enjoyed the luxury of ease after the toils of war. My courser refreshed in the limpid stream bathed himself with visible satisfaction.

It was now past mid-day, and nature seemed to melt beneath an unclouded sun. The air was perceptibly hot, and no enjoyment could equal coolness and rest; but there was no shade near, nor any place to retreat from the burning beams which drank up my juices.

In this situation no nectar could be more delicious than the transparent water; and I forgot, beside the grateful stream, the dangers that surrounded me. The roar of battle broke not upon my meditations; which returned to Spain, to my absent friends, and to a wish that all my travels might terminate in the company of some charming fair, such as the portrait which I still preserved in my bosom.

I was aroused from my reflections by the prancing of my steed; who pawed up the ground and reared himself with every sign of impatience. I admired the sagacity of the noble animal; who, no doubt, perceived the decline of day, and knew the length of way which spread between us and any place of repose.

I arose at his summons, and began to urge him to retrace the road we had passed; but, he, probably knowing the direction to the interior of the country and his native plains, refused to obey my desires; and plunging with me into the stream, swam over and began to gallop, unchecked by the reins.

I was altogether easy at this adventure, for I remembered our excursion in the boat to the Moorish castle; and, while I rode forward, I could not avoid, in my own mind, expecting some singular termination of this day's journey. It was impossible in these sandy and barren plains to quit the horse; for I might then wander and perish, without ever meeting a human dwelling.

He continued at his own speed, and the sun set upon this ocean of sand. I now began to tremble lest the tigers and hyenas, which haunt the desert, should scent us on the tainted gale. Hunger began to press upon me; all the horrors of dreary solitude began to crowd upon my mind, and fill my fancy with the darkest forebodings. I had no knowledge of the country, I might, perhaps, be going forward to the great desert, where I must inevitably perish; and my soul shuddered at the terrible idea.

## CHAPTER XX.

WHILE I thus gave loose to all the images of a despairing mind, I beheld at a distance, a dark object which broke the continuity of the horizon, and inspired a faint ray of hope that some habitation of man was nigh. The moon was not yet arisen. The wide and unsearchable wilderness was bordered around with impervious obscurity, which gradually brightened into the deep azure of the heaven, scattered with stars, that burned with a luster unknown in

Europe; and which, in these fervid regions, where humidity is exhaled by the blaze of day, serve to render night beautiful, and almost to dispense with the mild beams of the moon.

As I approached nearer this dark and shapeless object, which had inspired me with hope, I perceived a more regular form of building; the confused mass breaking into walls and battlements, with a quadrangular tower at either corner.

I was surprised to meet, in the midst of a desert where no trees were to be found, a building which seemed to be the work of enchantment. A crystal stream flowed over golden sands, and crept around its wall, watering and refreshing an extended plantation of delightful verdure; and a fragrance so strong, that I could catch it upon the breezes of the night, informed me of the beauties of its cultivation.

My courser snuffed up the freshness of the stream; very unwillingly attending to the sauntering motions of inquiring caution, I had to learn what reception would be given to a stranger in this solitary abode, where suspicion seemed to have united with pleasure in forming a retreat.

I drew near the castle, from whence no light shone upon the dreary waste, nor any sound of inhabitant invited the weary traveler to the hospitable table. I marched my horse round one side of the building, without perceiving the gate, and began almost to believe that some giant or necromancer was the master of the castle.

While I stood giving wings to my fancy, the solemn moon raised its silver crescent amongst the stars; and my mind was delighted with the awful grandeur of the sight. I looked towards the far-spread plain of sterile sands, where all was obscurity, and danger, and doubt; and my soul seemed to start from the suggestions of fancy. I turned towards this grand pile of building, and the labors of men excited wonder, mingled with regret at the necessity of so formidable a preparation for safety.

While I was employed, a gentle strain of music moving on the breath of the night, awoke my attention, and recalled the invisible minstrels I had heard upon the sea-shore, to memory. It ceased, and a few irregular notes seemed to prelude a performance. I advanced, cautiously, and through a narrow unglazed window, could discern the faint outlines of a human form; but the light was too obscure to distinguish with certainty.

After playing over a few airs, some light and some sad, the lute was laid aside and I heard distinctly these words:

### AIR.

The evening breeze, the morning air,  
Liberty breathes and moves a pleasure;  
The lark that soars aloft may share  
Every sweet of nature's treasure.

But wanting liberty, what can charm?  
Not life itself is worth possessing;  
Liberty, poverty can disarm,  
And wide diffuse increase of blessing.

I had learned sufficient of the Moorish dialect on board with Mustapha, and since my arrival at Ceuta, to understand perfectly what might be spoken and to hold conversation; so that I was not at loss for an interpreter to this little air; which the person no sooner finished than they withdrew, leaving me again without hope of gaining admission; as from the words of the song I supposed it to have been sung by a prisoner in the tower.

I waited near an hour, in hopes they might again appear, but in this I was disappointed; proceeding in my search round the castle. The river forms a moat wholly round it. On the opposite side I discovered a drawbridge, but it was drawn up. It was impossible to gain admission over the lofty walls. So much security bespoke the great suspicion of the owner; and I should have turned away from this impregnable building, had any other resource been nigh.

I stood on the bank of the stream, meditating on various projects. My courser had long

shown signs of impatience, but now he was not to be restrained; plunging at once into the river, he swam with ease to the other side, and landed me safe in the outer court of the castle. I paused to listen, looking round me with apprehension; no guard appeared on the watch, and the inhabitants were totally silent.

I dismounted, and hanging the bridle over my arm, proceeded forward. No creature of any description seemed to be abroad; and the carelessness of the watch ill agreed with the strength of the fortress. I gained the inner court, tracing my way by the light of the heavens. I ventured to call; but a hollow echo alone returned reply. I proceeded to the gate, it was firmly closed; and having knocked several times, I was astonished that no person answered the summons. My courser seemed to second my endeavors, striking his hoof upon the ground and neighing. "Surely," thought I, between fear and admiration, "this is a wonderful castle; and did I believe in tales of magic, this were sufficient to create alarm." It was now past the hour of midnight, as I judged by the moon.

"I will hazard everything," said I to myself. "I can prove the carelessness of the slaves, and my ignorance and necessity must excuse my daring."

I left the gate, and moving round the court examined carefully where it was possible to enter, but there were no windows on the ground floor. Round the upper windows ran a balcony, where, in martial times or holidays, the gentry of the place might sit under cover, or behind the lattice-work, to view the exhibitions in the yard. It was some moments before I could form any device to climb this balcony; when I recollected that by the assistance of my wonderful horse I might possibly succeed.

I smiled to myself as I led him beneath the balcony. I mounted on his back, and with some difficulty made good my landing. I should have traversed the balcony, but I found it divided by a strong partition, no doubt to prevent intrusion upon the ladies' side.

A few paces brought me to a little door, which I found open; but venturing forward in the dark, I passed through several apartments, every moment listening to hear if anyone came nigh—but all remained profoundly still.

I now began to suspect that some mischief was abroad. That I had either stumbled on the fortress of robbers, who might be out on a journey of depredation, or that treachery and murder were within. Not the remotest sound was to be heard but what proceeded from the faint echo of my footsteps; and I trod so light that I seemed to myself like a midnight assassin stealing to the chamber of repose.

I passed one chamber after the other through a labyrinth of windings, but darkness prevented me observing the decorations or furniture. At last I fancied I could perceive a dawn of light through a length of gloom. I advanced with extreme caution, for I knew not the reception I might meet, and I listened to catch the sound of voices fancy was ever creating.

As I drew near, I plainly distinguished a sound which I took for repeated sighs, as from a person in extreme distress. "Doubtless," thought I, "this is the prisoner whom I heard; now, when midnight allows of privacy, they are indulging grief; and shall I then intrude upon those sacred moments? Will not death follow my presumption? Yet, perhaps, heaven has conducted me hither as an instrument of their liberation; yet, whether they are male or female, I know not."

This consideration arrested my steps. I waited in hesitation; when I heard some person break into a fit of laughter, very different from the sounds of distress I had just heard. I drew my saber, and stepped slowly toward the door, which was about two inches open, through which opening shone a strong and brilliant light.

I ventured to look through the open door, as much as it would allow, and perceived that this



was a saloon, superb with the splendor of Eastern magnificence. The roof glittered with lusters. On the side opposite me played a fountain of perfumed water, which at once cooled and scented the air; the floor was covered with a rich carpet, and around were cushions of crimson silk fringed with gold. Though my eyes could have dwelt delighted on this display of elegance, my situation did not allow minute observation; being attracted by two persons whom I instantly saw by their habits to be slaves.

One lay upon the floor venting sighs, which were the only signs of life I could distinguish; the other stood over him with a goblet of wine in one hand, and his yellow turban in the other. "Long life," cried he, with a burst of laughter, "to Benridden the Great, conqueror of the mighty Habil; master of the harem of the great bashaw; lord of the household; great at the table and invincible at the cup; who cares for no man, and defies"—

At this moment his eyes, which he glanced round the room, as if to receive the homage of a crowd, caught my figure, which I had inadvertently advanced half forward, attracted by so curious a sight.

He remained fixed with one foot upon his fellow-slave, being either so terrified at my strange dress and appearance, or so overcome with liquor, that he had no power to quit his position, and the goblet trembled in his hand.

I conceived, at once, my advantage; but the danger of alarming those who might be asleep, prevented my improving upon his terror. I entered the saloon, therefore, with diffidence, telling him that, if he did not betray me, he had no danger to fear. He stammered out some confused interrogatories, to which I replied:

"Did you come here by the bashaw's order?" said he.

"Did you suppose me fool enough to venture without them?" returned I, guessing by this that the lord of the castle was absent. "Come, most mighty Benridden, I see you can entertain yourself; now use your hospitality, and let me see how you can act the part of *lord of the household*."

"Mahomet is a witness," said he, reeling towards a collation of sweetmeats, fruit, and wine, "that, whoever you are, you are heartily welcome; and if you are come by the bashaw's orders, you see what is my order—I love sobriety and regularity."

I smiled at a thousand absurdities he uttered, and being both hungry and weary, I made no difficulty in seating myself on a cushion, and taking freely of what stood before me. Benridden, who was too far gone to think much of consequences, pressed the goblet upon me.

"That's what pleases me," cried he, every sentence roaring with laughter. "You can drink like a man; but as to that beast of a fellow, Habil, he can't drink at all. I hate drinking alone, like a tippler."

"I suppose," said I, "you are master of the castle in the bashaw's absence?"

"Yes, yes. I am chief eunuch of the harem, and governor of all the slaves. But it surprises me, after all, to think how you got in; unless you was drunk and tumbled through the roof."

"I should like very well," said I, "just to see what taste the bashaw has in his choice of a harem; the master, I see, is very well chosen."

"By Mahomet! you're right there," said he, hiccupping; "but I don't apprehend the bashaw sent you here for that."

"No matter," returned I; "did you never go on another man's errand and perform your own? Come, come, Benridden, master of the harem, and prince of the slaves—wine make us all friends and confidants—I shall keep your secret, depend upon it."

"So you shall, for I ain't going to trust you at present. What time does the bashaw

replied I, "judge yourself of the

and the chances of battle, too," said he,

pouring out some wine, half of which he spilled upon the table. "Well, here's to his health, dead or alive—they Christian dogs are devilish tough, and make a long job of it."

I immediately judged that the bashaw was at the siege of Ceuta; and I took hope to myself in the prospect there was of his being some time absent. I became more tranquil in mind; and in order to gain as much information as possible, bestowed so many ecomiums on the wine, that Benridden was very shortly in a state little better than his fellow-slave.

I then had an opportunity to make observations. I had no doubt but these slaves, presuming on the absence of their master, had lighted this saloon to indulge their vanity; and I was no longer at loss to account for the negligence which had permitted my entrance.

The wine I had drank had inspired me with a spirit of adventure; and trusting to the Bashaw's absence, the manner of my entrance, and the singularity of the incidents, made me despise trifling dangers; and taking a bunch of keys from Benridden, who lay upon his back on a cushion, I opened a door opposite to that by which I entered.

The passage was lighted with lamps, and perfumes everywhere scented the air. I shall not attempt to describe to you the varied magnificence of every apartment I passed; in each of which played a fountain of different form, diffusing around a delightful freshness, and, by its sound, inviting to repose.

Every chamber was lighted by a large lamp from the center; and appeared in my eyes more splendid than the first. The last door I opened, led me into a room hung with rose-colored silk, and lighted by a taper at each corner in a brazen stand, diffusing a soft and agreeable light through the chamber. On one side were arranged rows of Oriental flowers, unknown to me, but which breathed an aromatic perfume that invited sleep. But, notwithstanding so many charms to catch the wandering sight, all my attention was fixed on the person of a lady, who reclined upon a rose-colored couch, in a robe of transparent purple, which fell over a dress of the finest muslin India can boast of producing.

Her admirable form seemed as if visible through the thin vesture; and the beautiful moulding of an arm, which was uncovered, sufficiently attested the graces of the sleeping fair. I advanced, cautious of disturbing the tranquillity of her slumbers; though I wondered, that at so late an hour she should repose upon a couch, unless from the intense heat of the weather.

I drew near to take view of a face, which could not fail to be lovely, but which a light veil hid from my view. This I cautiously removed, and for a time stood entranced with indescribable rapture.

I beheld the beautiful Selina, the image of the portrait I had so long preserved with a lover's care; but the fine shade of the rose-colored furniture, if possible, rendered her bloom more delicately lovely; and I could scarce believe, that the form I beheld was not of celestial moulding.

My whole soul was absorbed in love, every pulse beat with a new sense of existence. I took the portrait in my hand, to trace the amazing similarity; and where there was a difference, nature seemed to have made it with advantage.

"Beautiful creature," said I to myself, "is it for this I have been conducted through so many dangers? The inhabitant of a harem, and too probably the slave of some imperious and jealous tyrant. Wretch that I am! not to discover this choicest treasure of the world, till, perhaps, it is impossible to attain; or at least possess it with honor."

My agitation occasioned me to speak aloud; and the lady awoke with a faint scream of surprise at the sight of a stranger.

I sank involuntarily on one knee before her, repeating a thousand protestations to quiet her alarm. I flatter myself that there was something of sympathy between our souls. She

listened to what I said, and I fancied that a smile diffused itself over her countenance.

"Stranger," said she, in a voice which sounded in my ear like a seraph's, "you are, perhaps, ignorant of the danger you stand in, should the bashaw arrive and discover you here. How you have passed hither is a prodigy; but destiny may prevent your return, if you do not immediately comply with my desire, that you will do so."

"Lady," replied I, bowing, "what else could you have asked which I would not have instantly performed? but look on this picture and tell me if you ever saw the original?"

I gave the picture into her hand. "Great Mahomet!" exclaimed she, "the features resemble me. I never, to my knowledge, sat to a painter."

"This charming painting," said I, "came into my possession, many months since, in a singular way. I have sought for the original with an interest I pretend not to describe; and now when a train of wonderful adventures have brought me into the presence of a lady infinitely more lovely, think you"—

"Hold, I beseech you," said she, blushing; "do not pour upon me such unmerited compliments. I am a poor wretched creature, though you see me here surrounded with splendor, and decorated with profusion."

My first ideas flashed upon my mind, and I trembled while I replied: "Is it possible, lady, that in the midst of all which might gratify the senses, please the fancy, and give a charm to life; possessing the favor and sharing the love of the bashaw, you can be unhappy?"

"His love," replied she, "is poison to my soul; his favors are hateful to my eyes; and the pleasures which invite my sharing, are dull and insipid. Where constraint is, there can be no reciprocal regard."

This speech instead of removing my fears, increased my anxiety. I no longer doubted; and a heavy sigh broke from my almost bursting heart. I found it impossible to answer; and I gazed upon her features, drinking love and despair into my soul. She perceived my embarrassment, and, perhaps, imputing it to the freedom of her concluding words, blushed deeply, and seemed agitated with thoughts which admitted no utterance.

Thus, for some time, we gazed upon each other mutually confounded. Love surely can speak by the eyes; and the language they express is universally understood without variation of idiom.

I read sufficient to inspire me with courage. "Perhaps, charming lady," said I, "you have not been sufficiently long within these walls to be accustomed to their pleasures? or, perhaps, you are too refined in your sentiments of love, to share the object with others?"

"No," answered she, with a charming confusion, "my heart never yet knew more than the name of love; I have neither parents, relations, nor friends."

"Is it possible?" cried I, in an ecstasy of satisfaction; "are you not then the mistress of this bashaw?"

"No, nor will I ever be," replied she, with an emotion of indignation. "Sooner will I be placed in the meanest drudgery of his palace. I have the most profound aversion to him."

"Then let us fly," cried I, venturing to touch her hand with the greatest respect. "Trust to the honor of a soldier, and a Spaniard."

"A Spaniard!" exclaimed she, turning pale. "I thought, indeed, you were a foreigner; but Spaniards I have been taught to hate. Are they all like you?"

"It is reasonable," replied I, "that you should detest my countrymen; your family possibly suffered under that edict, which was as cruel as it was unjust; but believe me, lady, we now entertain different sentiments. Forget, then, that I am a Spaniard; or remember it only to exact of me services, which shall expiate my part of a national crime, committed in my infancy. I have a fine Arabian courser waiting in the courtyard; the bashaw is absent; the day has not yet broke upon the turrets of



the castle—and we may fly far beyond pursuit."

"But whither?" inquired she. "Am not I, till this hour, a total stranger to you. Shall I consent at the first interview, to fly from one man with another—and that man a Spaniard? I cannot, indeed I cannot."

"Then," cried I, "you have a regard to the Bashaw, a tie of gratitude for his favors, and that will induce you to yield to his wishes. Let this image of yourself plead for me; it has been my companion in numerous dangers; and possibly has been a secondary cause for our meeting this night."

She was about to reply, when we were alarmed by the cries of Benridden, as he stumbled along the passage, swearing revenge for the trick I had played him.

"Ho, dog of a Christian!" cried he, "I thought where I should find you. You would not take my advice, and let the ladies alone. I never was better qualified in my life to give advice."

"Well, what's the matter, Benridden?" said I; "what has happened?"

"Oh, nothing at all, nothing," stammered he: "we shall only be boiled, and roasted, and baked before morning. I, for being hospitable, and doing the honors of the castle—you, dog of a Christian, for accepting it—and little Selina, for liking a young man better than an old one."

"All that is nothing to the purpose," said I.

"I said so, didn't I?" replied he, reeling towards the door again. "You may stay if you like it; I only called to tell you the Bashaw is returned."

Selina trembled and turned pale.

"What say you?" demanded I, "have you seen the Bashaw? who is he? where is he? where did you see him?"

"See him? No, thank my stars, he has not seen him. I shall go and blow my brains out to save him the trouble. I only called to advise you to do the same."

"Who has seen him?" said Selina; "good Benridden, tell me."

"Aye, aye," said he, "I am good now—well, only see how these ladies coax a man of understanding! I don't know that anybody has seen him, but I saw his horse."

"His horse!" repeated I, taking courage; "what color is his horse? If it was a cream color, that is his horse which brought me to the castle."

"Who is most sober now?" said he; "would you persuade me, that his Highness lent his favorite horse to you?"

"If that is his horse," said I, "we are safe enough: the owner will probably never trouble this castle again."

"Thank Mahomet!" cried he, "then we shall have time to put everything in order: and the first great order is, that no living male, but the Bashaw himself, and I, Benridden, his slave, enter these chambers."

"A moment's patience, my good friend," said I, finding that he became serious and sober together; "I have discovered in this lady a relation."

"Aye, aye, I dare say, a wonderful connection; but not a bit nearer for the present."

"Go," said Selina, "go, brother, some fitter opportunity I will relate to you all that has happened since our separation."

"When the Bashaw returns, my dear sister," said I, charmed with the sentiments this condescension gave birth to, "we shall not, perhaps, have the opportunity we desire."

I bowed and withdrew, followed by Benridden. I had no doubt if it was the Bashaw which I had dismounted, but he had fallen in battle: and I could not sufficiently admire, that the ill fortune of my rival should have been the means of introducing me to the lady my fancy had long worshiped. I resolved, at all events, to remain in the castle: and making Benridden a considerable present, at the same time that I hinted my power of betraying his negligence, I brought him over to my interest. From him I learned, that three months since,

the Bashaw had purchased Selina of a slave merchant, who had dealings at Algiers; that, contrary to the usual customs of her sex and country she had refused the offers and resisted the attempts of her master; who had by persuasion and kindness endeavored to bend her mind to her situation. He had not succeeded in his desires, when the calls of war hurried him from the castle; from which he departed with a hint that she must prepare to be more compliant when he should return.

This implied threat increased my impatience, and determined me to use every argument to prevail on Selina to fly from so dangerous an abode; for though I had every reason to believe the Bashaw had been slain, yet my flight had been so immediate that I had not witnessed his death.

Benridden appointed me a little chamber to sleep in. Though the fatigues of the preceding day were far beyond the strength of nature, yet the quick succession of events so occupied my mind, that it was long before sleep could envelop my senses with its mysterious veil; but when once recollection was overcome, nature asserted her right, and I remained till late the next day in a profound and refreshing repose.

On awaking, it was some time before I recollected myself, or could account for the singularity of all things around me. The chamber, where I lay upon a mat, the open windows without glass, the burning heat, reminded me that I was in the sandy plains of Morocco, and all my recent adventures became familiar to my memory—though I felt a sort of anxious fear that Selina, the castle, and the beautiful gardens might have vanished.

When I dressed myself, and was satisfied that this magnificent castle yet remained, I hastened to Benridden, who provided me some food, and desired me to report that I had arrived from the battle with news of the Bashaw's death.

The non-appearance of the Bashaw, and the presence of his horse, confirmed the report, and created, even in Benridden, so much confidence, that he assumed the uncontrolled direction of the castle, threatening with the bastinado all those who refused to obey his orders.

I entreated him again to permit me the company and conversation of Selina, but he was inexorable; alleging that though the Bashaw might be dead, his heirs would revenge any treachery of this nature; at the same time he promised, when the night should return, that he would conduct her to the garden, where there would be no danger of meeting any other of the ladies, who, were it only from jealousy, would rejoice to bring mischief upon Selina.

I was obliged to acknowledge his reasons, and flattered his pride not a little by so doing.

## CHAPTER XXI.

DURING the day I amused myself in the gardens, which were laid out with a luxury unknown in European climates, uniting every object which could gratify the senses with the variations of nature.

The pellucid stream meandered over a bed of the finest sand, crept beneath bending mimosa, whose drooping branches entertained the eye; wound between sloping banks of soft verdure, sprinkled with flowers; or murmured over pebbles of polished surface, amidst a grove, whose coolness invited to rest; whose shade excluded the burning glare of day, and whose fruits gratified the taste and refreshed the senses.

Beds of perpetual migzonette seemed scattered by nature in the little dells. Description must be supplied by imagination to form an idea of all the charms which art had created in this little spot, fertilized by the stream, which, not far distant, lost itself in the sands. The golden bird of Arabia, and the nightingale of Persia had been tamed to build in the groves; and when the fever of day was past, their

modulated song so mingled with the air, that the breath of harmony seemed to float amongst the foliage.

In the midst of this grove stood a temple, built of porphyry and parian marble, in a circular form. The windows were of Venetian glass, stained with purple; which precluded from sight without, and within streamed the temple with a cool light, as if shed by a constellation of sapphires.

This temple was erected to pleasure; and being without prospect, the internal decorations were planned with all the luxury of Eastern imagination. A pool, which was cooled by a marble basin, so polished, that every object was reflected, invited to its refreshing wave. A symphony of flutes breathed the softest strains, upon touching a spring which admitted a stream of air. Crystal vases contained delicious wines, which Mahomet has forbid in vain. Dried fruits piled up in profusion; and the fresh could be easily gathered for use. The furniture was such as the greatest voluptuary of Europe could not easily suggest.

In the midst of so much magnificence, it must have been supposed that the heart of man might rest content; but an Arabic sentence, inscribed over the bath, sufficiently spoke the thoughts of its possessor, and drew a sigh from my breast:

*Let not the present moment escape thee unenjoyed; for of the next who shall assure thee?*

I turned round in the middle of this charming place. I supposed in fancy, that it was filled with a party of beautiful slaves from the harem of the Bashaw, and that himself was seated upon an elevated cushion, the delicacies of the garden, wine made delicious with spice, and the air loaded with perfumes, crowded upon the senses, and no means of pleasure left wanting. What, in such a scene, would be the effect of this sentence? In one hour may all these beauties fade, the appetite fail, health depart from the frame, and the yawning grave open beneath our feet.

Such were my reflections in this temple of pleasure; and I hastened, melancholy with the ideas that arose on the transiency of all things earthly, to ramble in the grove, and pull the bending grapes which clustered over me, like crystalized drops of wine.

I stretched myself upon a bank which gently sloped to the water, and was profusely covered with sweet smelling violets of various tints, the red, and blue, and yellow predominating. My sighs were breathed toward Selina; and I counted the moments with impatience till the first star of evening rose above the towers of the castle, and proclaimed the coming night.

Benridden did not fail in his promise; the non-arrival of the Bashaw gave him confidence, and the glass was not many hours together from his lips.

Once more I beheld the beautiful figure of Selina, as she advanced amongst the tufted flowers; and, not waiting till she came to where I stood, I ran to throw myself at her feet. Benridden, though ignorant himself of the passion of love, had sufficient knowledge to know we could dispense with his presence; and, to do us further service, while we sat upon a little seat of flowery turf, he stationed himself at the entrance of the walk, to prevent intruders.

It was in this place that I give Selina the pledge of my heart, and received some little acknowledgement in return; I spoke to her of Spain, the prospects before me; and the pleasure of mutual esteem, with that domestic satisfaction the promiscuous intercourse in the East destroys.

She informed me that when she left Spain, she was so young, that she had not the smallest recollection of relations or friends. "I have heard my nurse, or whoever she was," said she, "repeat to me a thousand cruelties which took place in that action; but she never mentioned names, or particularized circumstances relating to my family. We lived at Tunis the



I was about five or six years of age, when my nurse sold me privately to a slave merchant.

"She had dressed me out to the best advantage, for the purpose of enhancing my value; and I remember, in particular, that a string of pearls hung round my neck, which the merchant insisted should remain, as they gave me a very becoming look; and being pleased with my figure, he paid down the whole price which she demanded, and I was carried to his house.

"My person engaged his attention, and my prattle his favor. I was educated with care and expense; and though he was an old man, he took pleasure in the advancement I made in my exercises: and never having experienced the caresses of a parent, he acquired that place in my heart.

"I pass over the days of my youth; the pleasures of freedom, in rambling over extensive gardens, and shady groves: in dancing before him in the European and Egyptian fashion; till about a year since, when my benefactor died; and his rapacious heir sold me to a merchant in Algiers, who again sold me to the Bashaw Hali, whose slave I now am."

I expressed my thanks for this recital, and our disclosure took a tender turn, where mutual affection was visibly interested: and though I could not overcome her fears of flying, and the unknown dangers of an unknown world, she acknowledged, that were it not for those dangers, she knew not how far her fears of the Bashaw might lead her to trust to my sincerity.

I proposed that Benridden should accompany us; and, as his reward, I offered him freedom, and a conveyance to any part of Morocco, or the Levant, he should choose. A proposal he would have adopted in an hour, had we not been certain of the Bashaw's death, which allowed us to take our plans at ease, and provide a suitable conveyance for Selina; who could not be exposed without extreme hazard, in a country like Morocco.

It was daylight when I parted with Selina. I considered myself as peculiarly fortunate in the friendship of Benridden; who was well acquainted with the country, and might guide us over those sands my well-trained courser had conducted me.

Benridden was not agitated with the hopes and fears of love. I urged him to let the ensuing night conduct us from the castle.

"One night," said he, "we will dedicate to pleasure, and the next to business."

"But, my dear friend," answered I, "let the business be first, and then we may enjoy the pleasure with increased satisfaction."

"Or we may not enjoy it at all," said he; "let Benridden alone for knowing something of life. He that sows does not know who may reap; but he that reaps, need not care who was the sower. I proclaim it, and it shall be done."

"I will give to every slave in the castle a feast before my departure, and that this very night—the Bashaw's brother will, most likely, be here to-morrow—I will have all the Bashaw's ladies into the Celestial Saloon; and may I never reach my dear native little city of Smyrna, if a single slave goes to bed sober!"

In vain I endeavored to prevent the execution of this object; I am persuaded, he would rather have sacrificed his freedom.

The castle was involved in a sort of confusion, which always ensues on the absence or death of a chief; and if the slaves acted in concord, it was with the design of promoting their own pleasure.

We no longer regarded appearances. I passed several hours with Selina, rambling over this magnificent structure; and my eyes were not a little gratified with the sight of four ladies and their female attendants, who ran about the departments with the giddiness of girls.

They considered the death of the Bashaw in the same light as the slaves; for, having no attachment, they rejoiced in novelty, and prepared for the entertainment Benridden had promised them in the celestial saloon, one of

the grandest places in the castle, and reserved by the Bashaw for his highest festivals.

Selina herself was not without expectation; and though I did not feel altogether satisfied, yet the novelty I expected, which in any other situation would have been impossible from the seclusion of the females, gave me considerable pleasure.

The ladies expressed their astonishment at my figure in terms not a little flattering; but they had never before seen an European, and scarce any other man than the Bashaw. In particular, a lady, named Namouna, addressed herself to my notice; nor did she disguise the jealousy she had of my partiality for Selina.

I was embarrassed by her company, which deprived me of moments I could well have employed in particular discourse with Selina; and it was impossible to disengage ourselves without hazarding her resentment. She possessed a figure which would have dignified a high station; her fine dark eyes commanding respect, and the stateliness of her person enforcing obedience.

The other three ladies possessed more the manners of children. But I learned with surprise, that the Bashaw's favorite wife remained in her apartments; nor would mingle in the scene of revelry; remaining to mourn the loss of a man whom she loved, and who had made her the mother of two children, both of which were dead.

I pitied her situation; and I considered that this building, isolated in the midst of a desert, was a picture of the world; where one neighbor, or one nation, shall rejoice at what is distress or destruction to the other.

I should have been happy in administering comfort to this lady, but the rules of decorum forbade my intrusion; and what comfort could I bestow, when I should pretend to bewail a man, whom I had every reason to believe, had fallen beneath my arm. I judged it best to leave to time, that consolation it never fails to afford; and I prepared for the festival, which was to begin with the first hour of the night.

Selina retired to her chamber to decorate herself, and I wandered along the flowery alleys of the garden; whose walks were not graveled as in Europe, but spread beneath the feet a carpet of the finest verdure.

I sat down beside a fountain, to reflect and arrange in my own mind the dangerous journey I intended we should begin the following day; when, turning my eyes towards the castle, I beheld a full blaze of light shining from the windows of the central tower—and for a moment, I thought the building in flames. I soon, however, recollected myself, and was bending my way to the castle, when a slave came to me, and making a low obeisance—"Senor Spaniard," said he, "the great Bashaw desires your presence."

I started at the word Bashaw, and demanded if I had heard him right.

"The Bashaw Benridden," said he, laughing, "waits you in the celestial saloon. The ladies are all there; the dancers and the singers, just as if my Lord Hali had been alive."

"I will follow you; lead the way," said I.

If I had been surprised by the splendor of the hall which belonged to the ladies' apartments, how much greater was my astonishment when I entered this wonderful saloon. It was in form of a dome, of which was covered with small mirrors, sprinkled with golden spangles, so contrived that they glittered in imitation of stars. Large lustres of variegated glass were suspended from the cupola; and wax tapers being interspersed amongst various colored drops, gave them the appearance of constellated gems; the whole together reflecting so strong a light that at the first entrance the eye was dazzled with brightness.

The columns which supported the dome were covered with burnished gold, and entwined with wreaths of flowers, interspersed with tapers.

Between the pillars were hangings of blue silk, glittering with stars. When these drew up, before an elevated throne of entwined palm

trees, the perspective seemed without end every object being multiplied by large mirrors.

In this recess a table was spread with a variety of dainties; and Benridden had taken care that wine, and those spices which promote thirst, should not be wanting. Frankincense and sandal-wood perfumed the air, and a transport of pleasure irresistibly seized the soul at the sound of music and mirth, which added to the gayety of the place.

The ladies were seated upon elevated cushions, and I could not refrain smiling at the sight of Benridden placed in the canopy of state, which was hung with blue satin, like the rest of the drapery, and spangled with silver. He had the assurance to dress himself in the best robe of the Bashaw, amusing the green turban and purple pelisse, while a plume of ostrich feathers, set in a cluster of diamonds, nodded over his head.

My eyes were not long fixed upon Benridden, being attracted by the more beautiful figures of the ladies, who shone in all the charms that nature and splendor can bestow.

Namouna was habited in scarlet, trimmed with gold, which extremely became the majesty of her figure, and the darkness of her complexion. The other three were dressed in blue, in yellow, and in lilac; the latter of which was extremely delicate, and touched off a lovely countenance with an indescribable charm. But, however I might admire each other in their turn, and altogether, I was perfectly charmed with the lovely Selina, robed in a habit of the purest white, fringed and spangled with silver. Round her neck hung a string of oriental pearls, alternately hung with a bead of gold; and her hair was braded with flowers of the tufted snow-white and sweet scented keura, which had an effect altogether new. She seemed like an inhabitant of the skies drooping paradisiacal scents as she moved, and scattering light from the foldings of her robes.

My Spanish dress had a strange appearance amidst the turbans and long robes of the East. I took my seat between Selina and Namouna; who had purposely chosen her place, that she might partake in my conversation. Benriddenaped the bashaw with no small humor. The ladies were in high spirits, and the dancers filled the saloon which echoed with the music and peals of laughter.

Between the pauses of the entertainment, Namouna appeared thoughtful; and I more than once observed her eyes bent upon Selina, with a keenness and luster which arose from the working of anger restrained.

I could not remain blind to her advances, which it would have been impossible to mistake; and she scrupled not to rally me on my preference for Selina. This obliged me to preserve the profoundest silence with Selina upon the subject of our fight; as I had no small apprehension that Namouna might endeavor to frustrate our intention. Our discourse was therefore general, and the subject of Spanish dances naturally presented.

Selina informed me that she had learned the *fandango*, to please her first master, who had once resided for some years in Spain; and I entreated that I might accompany her.

Her figure was light as the zephyr; and being obliged to turn her long robe back with one hand, it gave her an air of gayety which well accorded with the dance and displayed the motions of an inimitable form. The freedoms which she dance allowed me, and the air of visible satisfaction in both of our eyes, flushed the face of Namouna with a resentment she could ill conceal. The color glowed in her cheeks, and anger flashed from her eyes; even Selina remarked to me her jealousy, with that distant insinuation, which showed her latent apprehensions of my constancy.

I never danced in my life with more spirit, the singularity of our different dresses, the beauty of the saloon, and the vivacity of Selina, gave wings to my steps. Namouna complimented us with a forced and overdone civility, which ill disguised the feelings of her mind.

Benridden, on his part, was in rapture; he



uttered nonsense with a volubility unrestrained; and he seemed to have forgot everything, but that he was, for that hour, master of the castle. Our performance had so much diverted him, that he resolved himself to attempt to perform with the dancers, and the slaves applauded his motions with repeated shouts of satisfaction; which was not a little augmented by his trampling on the robe of state: a robe, at the sight of which they had used to tremble; and the eye of whose wearer would have bent to the dust.

Benridden soon found himself warm with his exertions; and ordering the dancers to retire, he proposed that we should enter the recess, and partake of the collation and wines.

The supper-room was beautifully lighted; and, by the reflection of the mirrors, appeared to contain a thousand people, whose various figures were seen on all sides. Benridden, with an impudence of which he was master, took his seat at the head of the table, and the company ranged themselves on each side of him, highly entertained with his jests.

The finest fruits, preserved and fresh, arose in piles from dishes of porcelain and glass. Sherbet and a variety of wines were served in golden goblets, and the greatest profusion, even to extravagance, took place—it was truly a feast of slaves.

Namouna sat opposite Selina and I. She was attended by her own female slave, whom she would not permit to sit at the table, and to whom she from time to time whispered her commands. "Go, my dear," said she aloud, "bring me that bottle of Persian wine, the bashaw and I used to drink together; he is now no more, and my friends shall drink to his memory."

I did not altogether admire the turn of her eye, but yet I had no suspicion; and pouring out a glass of the black wine of Jerusalem, which stood before me, I begged her to pledge me. She took the cup from me, and drank it off with eagerness.

The wine she had sent for being come, she began leisurely to pour it out—it was strongly perfumed. "Come," said she, with a gay air, "Selina, the Fair, take this cup, and drink to your Spaniard's health." She arose, leaning a little over the table to present the cup to Selina, who, in her turn, rose and reached out her hand to take it.

A malicious glance from the eye of Namouna, which seemed to sparkle with triumph, flashed upon me with increased suspicion. The unfortunate fate of the beautiful Zara started to my remembrance, and I half arose to catch the cup from the hand of Selina, who was raising it to her lips.

The eyes of Namouna caught my motion; her face became deadly pale, and the blood forsook her lips.

"Nay, then," cried she, "this shall suffice!"

She grasped a dagger in her hand, which she raised to strike, at the instant that my hand touched that of Selina, which was lifted to her lip. At that moment I grasped my saber, to interpose its glittering blade—when the shrill sound of a trumpet transfixed us in new consternation, and destroyed in one moment all the gayety and spirits of the company.

Every person was suspended in horror, and seemed deprived of action by the immediate spell of enchantment. The arm of Namouna remained raised, and I had not power to draw my saber.

A second blast, which reverberated harshly through the castle, threw the whole company into unspeakable confusion. An universal uproar and cry of terror filled the saloon, and those who were not too much frightened to fly, hastened to hide themselves in darkness.

The guilty cup fell from the hand of Selina. A chilly languor, overspread her face, and she sank into my arms, pronouncing, "We are lost, dear Fernando; the bashaw comes!"

The trumpet a third time sounded, and the great drum beat with vehemence. Namouna no longer thought of revenge from her own hands—her spirit had recovered from its first

alarm. "Now," cried she, "thou shalt see, base Christian, that a child shall not be preferred to me."

With these words she quitted the table, advancing to the great saloon. The other ladies fainted away; Benridden became delirious with fear, pouring wine so fast down his throat, that he fell lifeless upon the sofa.

Selina lay in my arms without motion, and the excessive paleness of her face made me fear she was gone too far to recover. I knew not how to act; I was distracted at the frustration of our flight. I cursed, in the bitterness of my wrath, the folly of Benridden, but for whose whims we might have been far from the castle; and I trembled with various fears when I heard the approach of the bashaw, who entered the saloon in anger and amazement, attended by a number of guards.

His rage at the extraordinary scene before him, held him silent; while Namouna spoke with eagerness and passion.

"See, my lord, the riot and disorder in your absence! See this Spaniard, who has polluted the sacred chambers of your retirement! He came here boasting that he had slain you in battle; and since his arrival the castle has been filled with riot and excess. He has bribed your slave Benridden—he has offered violence to me; and behold, my lord, your slave, Selina, in his arms."

The bashaw drew near, grinding his teeth with madness; while every slave shrunk, mute and trembling, behind the pillars.

"My lord," said I, as he advanced, "you have returned at a time when you find your castle in confusion; but that you should impute to the belief that you had fallen gloriously in battle."

He stamped upon the ground, with a sudden motion which started me. "Wretch!" cried he, laying his hand upon a poinard he wore in his girdle, "dare you palliate crimes such as meet my eyes? How came you in this saloon? How came you into company with these ladies? Die! My arm shall revenge me."

He drew near with a quick step, and raised his weapon to strike. I endeavored to draw my saber, but it was entangled in the robes of Selina; and, in the urgency of the moment, I had recourse to the fatal dagger, which I constantly wore in my breast. I stretched out my right arm with this weapon, while my left encircled the yet lifeless body of Selina.

"Hali paused. 'Hali!' said he, 'I know him. 'Tis the man who had nearly slain me in the field! Guards! seize him, and drag him to the deepest dungeon of the castle.'"

I was surrounded in a moment, and several cimeters and pikes glittered around me. I trembled lest Selina might be wounded, if I attempted resistance—what resistance indeed would have been effectual in such a situation. My arms were quickly pinioned, and Selina, the tender Selina rudely seized by two savage soldiers.

"Bear her hence!" cried Hali; "give her to the women; and I swear, by Mahomet! dead or alive, she shall this night be mine!"

"Monsters!" cried I, struggling fiercely, "release me, that I may revenge this outrage on all that women call lovely! Hali! if you were a man and a soldier, I challenge your humanity and your honor not thus to deal with your enemy. The words of Namouna are utterly false—Selina is virtuous."

"Away! away!" cried he; "bear him hence! Let all these women be dragged to their apartments, to-morrow they shall be sold for slaves; and Selina, after I have sated my revenge, shall perform the meanest offices of drudgery."

My soul was agitated to despair. A blaze of frenzy rushed through my burning brain; and I became endowed with gigantic strength.

Selina was rudely carried away by two barbarous ruffians; her torn dress trailed upon the ground. Half the tapers were extinguished or broken by the affrighted slaves; the saloon, lately so gaudy, now appeared as if taken by

storm, and delivered to plunder and devastation.

I started, I struggled, and tore myself from the arms of the guards. I flew at Hali, with my lifted dagger, and should have killed him on the spot, had not Namouna thrown herself upon me with the weapon she yet held in her hand. I avoided her blow; and she received in her breast the dagger I had raised to destroy Hali.

Again I became a prisoner, the weapon remaining in her bleeding bosom. Agony tortured every feeling of my soul. I shuddered at the unintentional murder. I beheld her crimson cheeks pale and distorted in the agonies of convulsive death. I turned my face away with horror—I beheld the bashaw following the lifeless Selina; and sickness spread over my frame. A heavy dampness hung upon me; my eyes were set in clouds; the tapers disappeared; and I remained unconscious of existence.

## CHAPTER XXII.

AND how unhurt to tread the burning way,  
Where blinding sands in circling eddies play.

ON recovering I found myself in a place where no ray of light broke upon my sight. I breathed with difficulty, and found myself too weak to stand. A heavy chain round my body fixed me close to a wall, preventing my moving the distance of two steps; obliging me to remain wholly uncertain of my situation, and totally incapable of attempting to escape.

The remembrance of Selina almost deprived me a second time of sensation. "Oh," cried I, gnashing my teeth, "Selina! Selina! where art thou?"

The long avenues returned in faint echoes the name of Selina, and left me again to the dreariness of silence and darkness. The air was damp, hot almost to suffocation; and my groans seemed to return upon me from a long distance. As I had not the power of motion, I could only trace my dungeon in thought. I wondered that the hurry and confusion of the castle did not reach me; and I judged thence, that I was deep in the bowels of the earth.

Like a child which exhausts its strength in passion, I called on the name of Selina, and uttered execrations against the bashaw, till I became calm. A dead solemnity overspread my mind. I wondered that Hali so long delayed to satisfy his anger; and I could only impute it to the heart-rendering reflection, that Selina was yet in his power.

I leaned back my head against the damp wall; my temples beating with violence. A distant and hollow sound reached my ears, and awakened my attention. I opened my eyes, in expectation of beholding the bashaw, followed by his officers; and I fancied my death approaching.

I waited without apprehension. A steady composure overspread my mind. I felt as a man who knows he must undergo some painful operation; who knows it is for his welfare, and yet wishes it over. I heard a slow foot-step distinctly advance in the dark. It seemed to come through a long passage—I found my resolution not immovable—I trembled as I sat.

"What is this," thought I, "that comes upon me in the darkness of night? Is death inflicted in this country with the superadded horrors of imagination, which infinitely surpass all the preparations of reality?"

These reflections passed rapidly through my mind; and the footsteps drew near which were to assure me of the terrible certainty.

"Who comes?" said I, faintly; but no answer was returned; and I closed my eyes, expecting every moment the stroke of death.

A sudden sound at a distance caused me to look up. A glaring light flamed along the vaulted passage, and rapidly advanced, while a loud voice called the person before me to stop. I beheld the danger to which I had been exposed, with a shudder of fear. A black slave, with no other dress than a blue cotton shirt,



tied around his waist, held a battle-ax in his hand.

His countenance was fierce and fiery; and he seemed disappointed that he had not effected his purpose.

A person approached with a torch, whose features I could not distinctly perceive. "Stay," cried he to the slave; "stay, till I ask this wretch a question."

The sound of his voice seemed known to my ear. "Raise your ax," continued he, "strike him to the center if he does not answer the questions I shall ask!"

Then turning to me, "Tell me, base wretch! how you came into possession of this dagger?"

"That dagger," replied I, "came into my hands in a way singular and mysterious."

"Who is it that speaks?" demanded he. "What voice do I hear?"

Then holding the torch nearer my face, "Ha!" exclaimed he, "Fernando de Coello, is it you I behold? You, the man I feared had been murdered."

"Is it Mustapha whom I see in these dungeons?" cried I, astonished. "How have you gained this subterranean prison? Tell me, where is Selina?"

"She is with the bashaw," answered he; "you must accompany me thither."

"Never!" cried I; "strike!—I ask it as a favor of friendship."

"Unlock his chains," said Mustapha, with a smile; "I know better what is due to friendship."

The slave unlocked my fetters. "Follow me," said Mustapha, advancing with the torch; "I will procure your liberty, in recompense for my own."

"Liberty!" murmured I, "what is liberty without Selina? what is life itself without her? Mustapha, you know the picture of your long-lost sister? Selina is the resemblance of that picture. I conjure you, by the name of your sister, to free her from the bashaw's power."

"Trust to destiny," replied he. "Selina is the property of the bashaw."

A black and winding way ascended into the body of the castle. I seemed to be in a sort of dream, as I passed through various chambers, and entered on that suit of rooms where I had first seen Selina. We entered the last chamber where the distant dawn of day shed its tranquil light through the lattice, and a fine perfume from the garden breathed peace to the senses. But those had no charm for my soul. All my faculties were agonized at the sight of Selina, sitting quietly on a sofa with the bashaw, and leaning her head on his shoulder.

I stood transfixed to the floor. She raised her eyes towards me, sparkling amidst trickling tears. A deep blush spread over her cheeks. She smiled, but remained silent. Hali gazed upon her with pleasure; then turned his eyes towards me with a mixture of curiosity and anger, examining my figure with a penetrating look.

"Young man," said he, in a tone meant to inspire confidence, "Selina has just been saying many things in your favor. I am witness of your gallantry in battle, and cannot suppose you guilty of the murder Mustapha suspected. Selina has asked your liberty and I will not deny her first request."

I found my bosom swell with its wrongs; I darted a look of reproach upon Selina. "No," cried I, agitated with a tumult of passion, "no, my lord, I will not owe my life to the intercession of her, whom I now behold fallen from the pride of independent virtue. No! since I have lost her, life is a poor and insignificant gift, and I will not take it at her hands."

My passion arose almost to choking. I was overcome at once with recollections of tenderness and a view of all that I had lost.

"Quit the room," said Mustapha to a slave who stood in waiting. Then, turning to me, "be seated, I entreat," said he, "and calm these transports. This night has been a night of wonderful discovery. Fate has been unraveling mysteries, and circumstances the most

gloomy have produced effects the most pleasing. That is the Bashaw Hyraddin Hali, my brother, and the brother of Lady Zidana. That is Selina, the daughter of our long-lost sister, and this is Fernando de Coello, my friend and preserver."

I gasped for breath at these words; it was a flush of joy which crowded on my senses with insufferable transport, and I sunk for a moment into the arms of Mustapha. Selina was not to be restrained by the presence of her uncles; she rushed forward, and taking my hand, pressed it to her fluttering bosom—her angel voice called me to life.

Words were inexpressive of our feelings. We gazed upon each other with pleasure, for the short sentence of Mustapha had made us mutually acquainted, and the innocence of Selina seemed like a pleasing message from heaven, tranquilizing every other care.

I learned that Mustapha had found his brother in the midst of the battle, when his presence was necessary to save him from the sword of a Spaniard, who would have cloven his head. It was after this piece of service he ventured to explain to him the tragical fate of Zara. Hyraddin Hali was overcome with sorrow at his loss, and having no longer anyone to inherit his possessions, he resolved to retire from busy life, and pass the rest of his days in his castle.

The strange confusion that presented to his eyes, raised his anger beyond control. The words of Namouna had touched him nearly, and he resolved to be refused no longer by a slave, whose features and manner had made a strong impression upon his heart. The slaves who dragged away Selina, insensible as she was, placed her upon a couch, retiring when Hali entered.

He approached her, with every passion in a rage. Her disordered veil discovered her pale and disfigured features: and, for a moment, he believed her actually dead. He stooped down to be certain, and his eyes were attracted by the necklace of pearl and gold. He started with horror, as a thousand ideas and recollections rushed upon his mind. He called aloud for her attendants, and before she was sensible of the violence he had meditated, she opened her eyes to be received into his arms as a niece and acknowledged relation.

Mustapha confirmed his brother in the certainty of the necklace, which had been a present to Lady Zidana, for the little Selina, the day of her birth.

After this relation, Mustapha informed me that Almonzor was gone to his castle to bring Lady Zidana to her brothers. That he had been employed by Don Padilla as an instrument of destruction, having received a considerable sum to murder Lady Zidana; but being touched with remorse, and a sentiment of love for her beauty, he had spread a report of her being drowned in a party of pleasure; in which Don Padilla had the satisfaction to suppose that his instrument also had perished.

Almonzor passed over to Barbary; but being unable to prevail on the virtue of Lady Zidana, he kept her for many years in confinement at a lonely castle on the seashore, while himself, by his knowledge of men and society, acquired considerable riches in the pay of his government.

After these relations, we partook of a repast; and though the sun was risen, it was necessary to seek some refreshment for exhausted nature. I could scarcely credit my senses at this singular turn of fortune; and feared the success of my desires, when I reflected on the vast distance wealth would place between us.

It was evening when I awoke. Mustapha and Hali sent for me into the garden, where they sat in the Temple of Pleasure to enjoy the coolness. I partook of their repast; and, at their request, related all that had befallen me; beginning with my first interview with that strange appearance, which had accosted me as a wounded soldier, and which I believed to be the troubled spirit of Count Ferendez.

They were not a little astonished at my relation, and I gained considerable in their es-

teem; but that I was a Spaniard, and a relation of Don Padilla, was far from being a recommendation.

The customs of the East deny the company of women to men who are not nearly related; and I found no opportunity of conversing with Selina but when she could steal unobserved to the grove where we plighted our vows. I waited with anxious expectation for the arrival of Almonzor and Lady Zidana, under the faint hope that their interest might have weight in my favor—when all my expectations were blasted by a proposal made by Mustapha.

"Your passion for my niece, Selina," said he one day to me as we sat by the side of the fountain in the garden, "is not unknown to me or Hyraddin. We acknowledge your merits; but place yourself, my friend, in our situation, and ask, if possessing only one relation to inherit your wealth, you would willingly give her to a stranger? You cannot blame us in being unwilling to do so; but we propose to you a thing easy, and such as, if you are wise, you will not fail to accept."

"Hyraddin, I have told you, had once two children; the eldest, a son named Ali, who ran away about three years since, and has never once been heard of; the second was the unfortunate Zara, whose spirit of adventure was equal to her brother's. Hyraddin, being thus without children, will adopt you for his son provided you will profess the true faith of Mahomet. Without this, he can never bestow on you the person of his niece."

This proposal almost deprived me of life; and it was a long time before I had power to reply. At length I answered:

"Mustapha, since you first knew me did you ever know me guilty of a dishonorable action? Did I ever change my opinion for convenience? or say one day, what I would not stand to the next? I am a soldier, a Spaniard, and a gentleman; as such, no worldly motive, however powerful, can make me break the faith I have pledged to my country and creator. The opinion I have imbibed in my youth, shall descend with me to the grave; and you, as a man of honor, will answer in your own breast to the resolution my situation enforces upon me."

We parted, mutually dissatisfied; and, again I began to entertain thoughts of secret flight, upon which I meditated, till the arrival of Almonzor and Lady Zidana.

This lady, having been early used to the customs of Spain, did not possess that distant reserve so peculiar to Asia. She acknowledged me as a sort of nephew; and delighted to hear me talk of Grenada, and her native plains. At the distance of twenty years, she had not forgotten the landscapes that charmed her in youth, and she suppressed a sigh at my description of the ruined situation of the Moorish castle.

There yet remained in her person an outline, which brought the original to remembrance; and when I compared her to the whole length likeness in the picture gallery of the Castle of Montillo, a train of saddening reflections stole gradually over my mind—the decay of mortality placed the transiency of human life in full view.

"If then so short be our existence," said I to myself, "how worse than foolish to suffer trifles, to intercept the small portion of felicity we might partake."

I had no opportunity to lay my claims in person before Lady Zidana; I, therefore, ventured to disclose my schemes to Almonzor. He smiled at my folly, as he called it. "What," said he, "can you offer to these relations of Selina as equivalent? or how will you carry her away from a castle like this, two days' journey across the desert of Ceuta?"

I was startled at this fact, and remained silent.

"You are a young man," said he; "perhaps you have yet to learn that in pursuit of our own passions, we must flatter those of others. Revenge is nearly as paramount as love. You shall pledge yourself to bring Don Padilla to



justice; and to claim from him, in behalf of their sister, the estate in Grenada. No doubt your proposal will be accepted—and Lady Zidana, who has an ardent desire of revisiting Spain, shall accompany us.”

“Promise what you will,” said I, “you shall not find me tardy in the performance—give me but Selina, and take the world besides.”

Almonzor smiled and left me.

I shall not describe to you the cruel agitation of my mind, while these proposals were undecided. It is sufficient to say that, after many struggles, and the delay of many weeks, Hyraddin at last consented to give me his niece. Probably he feared that if he finally refused, he would be the means of her death, for the uncertainty she, as well as myself endured, preyed upon her spirits, and withered the roses on her cheeks.

After I had been made happy with a concession I had no right to expect—he requested that we should remain a month at his castle before our departure to Ceuta.

The month was expired within a few days—conveniences were provided for the ladies, and our escort named—when Hyraddin remembered that in two days the Ramadan would begin, when traveling is not allowed for pleasure; and thus I saw myself condemned to remain another month; which being passed without the usual amusements, appeared to me the most tedious time of my whole life. I was obliged, also, out of decency and respect, to submit to this long fast, much more severe than our Lent in Europe.

I saw the month expire with joy—I resolved to leave no exertion wanting. I saw all our equipage in readiness, and had all our servants in waiting in the courtyard. Mustapha, possibly with a view to strike me with a greater idea of their magnificence, caused all the slaves to muster in military array; and the musicians of the castle performed several Eastern marches—in which the loud-sounding gong of India was introduced with astonishing effect, its deep vibration penetrating through every chamber of the castle.

We took leave of Hyraddin and Mustapha, who were touched with regret at our departure; and we paid our respects, by signs, to Zulma, whom I had never seen, and who witnessed our little procession through a lattice window.

My heart bounded with the exultation of a conqueror, when we had passed the drawbridge and began to enter the desert. I took command of the party; and, in apprehension that a message might overtake us while we remained in sight, I caused the little band to move forward at a round trot; and in a few hours the castle appeared only a speck at the edge of a long tract of a sandy desert.

We had arrived the next day at Ceuta, having procured a pass from Hyraddin. I was generally believed to be dead; and my troops, from emulation, had so considerably suffered, that their remains had been sent to Spain to recruit in strength as well as numbers.

I clasped Selina to my arms with a transport of indescribable joy. She was now mine, almost beyond the reach of fortune; and, as soon as the rites of the church would permit, we pledged our faith upon the sacred altar, and in the sight of Him who, by creating difference of sex, has tacitly commanded this solemn institution.

The little fort and town of Ceuta was extremely crowded by the numbers of fresh troops from Spain; and being myself as a private man, I had much difficulty in procuring a little house for our family, that we might not be interrupted by the impertinence or curiosity of strangers. To this house I conducted my bride; and we sat down to a small feast, with hearts united by love and friendship.

I had attained the summit of my wishes in the possession of Selina; and I exulted in the certainty that I was now above the powers of chance, and out of the reach of reverse fortune.

Selina retired with her female slave to her chamber; it was eleven o'clock—and after

waiting half an hour till the slave returned, I left the company of Almonzor and Lady Zidana, who immediately retired to their several apartments.

It is now I am going to relate to you the most cruel incident that ever befel me.

Winged with impatience, I flew to the chamber of my lovely bride. I opened the door, and was palsied through every limb with a sight of horror. I beheld, seated upon the frame of the bed, the same figure I had seen in the Castle of Montillo, which led me into its sepulchral labyrinths. The same specter which, habited as a soldier, had first stopped me in the defile. Animated death was impressed upon his terrible countenance; his eyes fixed upon me, with a look which chilled my spirits as they flowed.

A half-uttered groan escaped my breast, as I sat down, speechless, upon an opposite seat, and continued to gaze on the strange form of this phantom, through the dim light which one glimmering taper emitted.

It was impossible to describe the sensations of the mind, at an interview with a visible, yet impalpable and supernatural being—a being, unconnected with any class of existence that is familiar to our senses; and which fill the thinking faculty of man with so much mingled wonder and terror, that the mind becomes more bewildered the more we attempt to reason and reflect.

Transfixed as I was with the unexpected appearance of this fearful guest, I turned my eyes with a cautious motion towards the bed where Selina lay, apparently in a profound sleep, which, in some measure, relieved my apprehensions on her account.

The specter still followed the motions of my eye, observing a profound and awful silence, which I knew not how to interrupt, and could scarcely endure. It moved not from where it sat till twelve struck upon the garrison clock; then, slowly rising, it stood between me and Selina, making a sign that I should depart.

I arose at his motion, but I was not willing to obey the intimation; it seemed shocking to leave Selina alone with this dread being in the room. I stood still. He frowned angrily upon me; and slowly opening his dark cloak, disclosed to me those wounds, which to my shrinking sight seemed to bleed afresh.

I shuddered at the sight; I remembered but too well the engagements under which I was bound. I bowed in obedience, and unwillingly quitted the room, a prey to the most distracting inquietude; and cast in one hour from all the aerial flights of fancied bliss. I saw that difficulties yet remained to be overcome, and the severest of all trials to be withstood, ere Selina could be other than nominally mine.

I sat down in my own chamber, for sleep was banished from my eyes; and gave myself up to all the vexatious reflections my situation could suggest. Above all things, it became necessary to conceal from the world and our friends this strange interposition; and it became necessary that Selina should partake in a secret that so nearly concerned her.

I was distracted with a thousand fears. I doubted whether she would give credit to so unparalleled a tale; and I blushed at the situation in which I was placed.

“Shall it be told,” said I to myself, “that I retired on the night of my marriage to sit alone? At any rate I will watch over my property—I will stand guard over her slumbers.”

With a mind determined to hazard every danger, I cautiously returned. But when I had gradually opened the door, my soul sickened at the sight of her terrible guardian, sitting as he had at first.

All my resolution vanished in a moment. I panted for breath, and sunk into a chair. There was a wild and frightful anger shot free from his eyes as he gazed upon me. I endeavored to avoid his glance, but it was impossible; my lips trembled without a sound; and, closing my eyes, I dared not to raise them again upon this petrifying object. An icy chillness crept over me; and it was not till the dawning of

the day that life seemed to return along my veins. The specter was no longer visible, and the streaks of morning brightened through the lattice.

It was impossible to describe the relief I experienced, all my faculties having been suspended or suppressed; and I approached the sleeping Selina, with a reverence which flowed from the sublimest feelings of love.

She yet enjoyed a tranquil sleep; and the warmth of the air gave a fine tint to her cheeks. I took her hand as I stood over her. “Charming angel,” said I, internally, “that purity which a superior being makes his watch, it shall be my care to guard; and sometime hence, when my strange engagements are fulfilled, shall it be my reward. Yes, lovely Selina, upon this fair hand I vow, that my respect shall remain till I have tranquilized the spirits of thy father, by demanding justice for his wrongs, and laid his remains among those of his ancestors.”

I kissed the hand I held with profound respect, and in a few minutes after she opened her eyes. “I will retire for a few moments, my dear Selina,” said I; “the day has just arisen; and if you will rise also, we will take a walk to witness the majesty of nature—and then I will inform you of many things it is now necessary you should know.”

## CHAPTER XXIII.

What need of force, when every thing at hand  
To meet our wishes?—*Tamerlane.*

We remained at Ceuta till the return of the next vessel which arrived from Spain. When we embarked for Malaga, and after a pleasant voyage, I had the satisfaction to salute my bride upon her native land.

Lady Zidana experienced all the sensations of a return to a much-loved country after a long absence; when innumerable and tender remembrance crowd upon us, and fill us with a delicious and inexpressible pleasure.

Selina and I lay in one room; but I had used myself to sleep in my military watchcoat on the floor, and my habits as a soldier prevented my finding any inconvenience.

On the first night of our landing, my mind was too much employed to sleep, and Selina herself was not inclined to repose. We therefore conversed till near midnight; and the singular adventure I had been engaged in, at no great distance from this very town, became the subject of our discourse.

My description of the fine scenery bordering the Mediterranean, the inimitable effect of moonlight on the trembling waves, and the obscure landscape, excited so much of her curiosity, that she proposed our going to the spot, where her cousin, the unfortunate Zara, was interred.

The night was similar to that on which I had taken my first ramble, and, after providing myself with arms, and wrapping Selina in my watch-coat, that the chill air might not affect her, who had so long been used to the burning heats of Morocco, we stole away from the house; and the guard at the gates knowing me, permitted us to pass.

Selina was delighted with the solemnity and sublimity of the scenery; the wind gently rippled over the waves; the regular motions, as they dashed on the beach, moved over the soul in secret awe. We stood, hand in hand, upon a rocky part of the shore, silently occupied with our own ideas, and the infinitude which circumsounded creation. A confused murmur of distant voices aroused our attention.

I would immediately have hurried Selina from the spot, apprehensive for her safety—when a sudden cry of distress caught my ear, and aroused the feelings of a soldier. Selina partook of my feelings, and we both hastened towards the sounds. I gave Selina one of my pistols, with which she might defend herself, and being dressed in appearance as a man, she had no sexual violence to fear.



I soon perceived a confused number of people on the shore, dressed like Spanish seamen. On our appearance they took to flight, leaving behind them a person who lay upon the sands. I feared that our arrival was too late. I stooped down to examine his situation, and found that he yet breathed, though he was deprived of his senses by several severe blows. I could perceive no wound, and began to entertain hopes that his life might be preserved. His dress was that of a fisherman, and I observed the sand near him, to have been partly thrown up; from which I inferred that his enemies had intended to conceal him after executing their purpose.

Fortunately, Selina had some strong essence, with which she chafed his temples; and, after some time, he recovered his speech in a broken and confused manner. His voice no sooner reached my ears, than I fancied it familiar; and my interest became, if possible, stronger.

In the Mediterranean, as you well know, there is no tide, and the sands, when there is no storm, remain constantly dry; so that we ran no danger by sitting down, and waiting till morning might bring us assistance; meanwhile our patient recovered his faculties by degrees, and when day began to break, he was so much better as to be able to stand upon his feet.

When objects were visible, I examined with attention the features of his face; his semblance to Selina, and the tone of his voice, equally struck me—a confused surmise ran through my mind.

"Are you a Spaniard?" said I; "are you in fact a fisherman?"

"I am a fisherman," replied he, in a low voice. "I had from time to time, laid by my little earnings, for a purpose I had much at heart; and, to be secure, I hid it a foot deep in the sands. My comrades discovered my treasure, by watching me to the spot, and, but for your assistance, no doubt would have murdered me."

"This is very natural," said I; "but you have a foreign accent, and, pardon me, I do not think you a Spaniard."

He appeared rather confused at these words. "Whether I am, senor," said he, "I have sufficient gratitude to acknowledge the favor I have received from you; in addition to which, I entreat that you will suffer me to remain here till some person of less note may come by, and conduct me to my hovel."

"Selina," said I, "this is surely some unknown brother of yours; his voice reminds me of Hyraddin Hali." This I spoke in the Moorish dialect.

He inquired, in the same tongue, if I knew Hyraddin Hali.

"He is my uncle," replied Selina.

"And I am Ali, his son," said the youth.

I was almost speechless with the pleasing surprise; and had Zara arisen from the sands where she was buried, I could not have been more astonished.

I pretended to doubt, and inquire by what strange accident the son of a bashaw should be metamorphosed into a poor fisherman.

"My story," said he, "is wonderful, but it is too long for my strength and situation. I have sufficiently exhausted my desire for rambling, and the money I had treasured was to have paid for my return."

I forebore tormenting him with questions, and with much difficulty we supported him to Malaga. Lady Zidana was charmed with so providential a meeting, and undertook to attend in person the recovery of her nephew Ali.

It was here that we learned the design of Don Padilla to become a husband, for the third time, in his old age; and it was out of compassion for the unfortunate lady, who was compelled by the avarice of her father, that we planned a scheme which Almonzor undertook to execute, with all the terrors of mystery, which he well knew how to assume.

It was a long time before Ali recovered his confusion, and was in a state of health to undertake a journey. I rejoiced in the happiness of

Hyraddin, as he would now no longer regret the loss of Selina, whose only portion would be her claim to the recovery of the Grenada estates.

The day was fixed for the departure of Ali, and I had prepared several little presents for my Moorish friends; when an unpleasant circumstance involved us in fresh troubles, partly, indeed, arising from my own negligence.

The fishermen who knew Ali only as one of their own class, were envious of his good fortune, in being protected by a person of some consideration; and not knowing how to revenge themselves, determined at last to plunder the little repository of his savings.

Providence had so directed that Ali had made his deposits immediately over the chest containing the body of his sister; and the fishermen, prompted by avarice, continued to dig in hopes of further gain, till they at last reached the trunk. Their surprise and disappointment were equal on discovering the dead body, which they immediately concluded to have been murdered by Ali; and, from the rich shawl which was folded on the breast, no doubt robbed of a considerable booty. They immediately laid an information before the magistrate, and Ali was arrested, and thrown into prison.

I applied in private to the magistrate, to whom I related the accidental manner in which I had witnessed the burial of the body near twelve months past. My sudden disappearance, he well knew, as a reward had been offered for my discovery. I then repeated to him the outline of my adventures, and that my curiosity in visiting the place where so singular an accident had happened to me, was the only means of saving the life of Ali, which these fishermen now attempted by other means.

The magistrate was convinced of my sincerity, and the proofs I had produced, so that he privately gave orders to secure the fishermen, who, after some delay of office, were sentenced to the galleys, and Ali recovered his liberty.

I caused the body of Zara to be enclosed in a glass frame, and that covered with a box of curious workmanship. This melancholy present I delivered to the care of Ali; taking of him a tender leave, and wishing him a fortunate voyage to his native country.

Having no further business to detain us at Malaga, and the time of the year being delightful, when the ripening stores of nature spread profusion to the hand of man, we preferred gliding up the Darro, as less fatiguing to the ladies, and affording a greater variety of prospect.

Lady Zidana remembered only the early period of her life, when she had delighted in the gardens of Grenada, and been happy with a man she loved; and this tender recollection filled her mind with those pleasing yet painful images which sentiment considers as the refinement of feeling.

Selina was enraptured with the prospects, and I was enraptured with Selina. Thus our voyage gave us all satisfaction, and we arrived, without accident, within one day's sail of Grenada. It was impossible that I should forget our adventures at the Moorish tower; and, as we drew near it, Lady Zidana became extremely melancholy. We could perceive its dark, frowning ruins at a considerable distance, reddened by the last rays of the declining sun.

"It was in yonder tower," said I to Selina, "that I first found the portrait which fixed my fancy, and which was taken for the lady, your mother."

"You never let me see that portrait," said Lady Zidana; "will you favor me, Fernando?"

"Now that the original is in my possession," replied I, "I have no value for it, but as it resembles you, madam, at the brightest period of your life."

Lady Zidana took the portrait—but trembling when she looked upon it, she let it drop, and striking upon the edge of the barge, fell into the water. I was not a little grieved at the loss, and Lady Zidana, in apology, imputed it to her agitation, "which," said she, "arose from remembering that this picture belonged to the count, my husband, who certainly

never parted willingly with it. But you tell me that you found it in yonder castle—how it could be there I am unable to imagine."

I then informed her that we had found it in a parcel, which, no doubt, belonged to some robbers; and that we supposed they had there concealed themselves in some secret chamber, as some person had passed us in the dark, but escaped our most vigilant scrutiny.

"There is beneath that castle," said Lady Zidana, "one of the most singular caverns, perhaps, in the world. I remember once visiting it in company with Count Ferendez. That building was a Moorish palace, and princess have been buried beneath its lofty towers; but now, alas! there remains only ruins; and I have lived to see destroyed, by wanton violence, what had taken ages to build and adorn, and which it would have required ages to destroy."

The night set in with clouds, and fearing that we might experience a storm, I proposed that we should land, and pass the time in one of the chambers of the tower, where we could light a fire of faggots, and our numbers would be superior to danger.

This proposal, after some little debate with fear, was agreed to; and putting the boat on shore, we secured her to the staple in the steps. I could not prevail on the ladies to proceed beyond the ground floor; the chamber of which was so blackened with the smoke of the former flames, that its appearance was dismal in the extreme, and excited a thousand unpleasant reflections.

We lighted a large fire upon the floor of dry boughs, and spreading some carpets, partook of a repast, which we mingled with wine till our spirits were reconciled to the gloom of our situation. Almonzor and myself, well armed, agreed to watch while our servants and the ladies should endeavor to sleep upon the carpets; and we sat silently regarding the embers as they glowed upon the pavement, and shot at intervals a faint blaze upon the smoky walls.

I pictured in my mind all the various transactions that had, perhaps, taken place in this dreary chamber. The carousals of mirth, and the outrages of violence, by turns, were present to my imagination; and I almost believed that I heard the cry of murder in the midnight breeze.

The terrors we had felt when listening to the storm arose fresh to my memory, and I shuddered at the reflection. I looked round upon Selina, whom fatigue had lulled to rest, and a more pleasing train of thought entered on my mind; when my astonished senses were confounded by a sight as strange as it was unaccountable.

I beheld in one corner of the room where the light of our fire shed an obscure reflection, one of the flagstones of the pavement slowly rise on one side, and a man's face, half covered with a venerable beard, appear beneath it. I was too much struck with horror to speak; but, grasping the arm of Almonzor, I pointed to the cause of my alarm. He had only time to be convinced that my terror was not an idle dream, before the stone closed into its place.

"What can this mean?" said Almonzor, starting on his feet; "let us examine, Fernando."

I was astonished at his coolness, which half dispelled my fears. "It is, perhaps," said I, "some spirit, whose body is buried beneath that stone."

"Then I will examine the skeleton," replied he, lighting a torch. "Come, Fernando, you were not afraid of a spirit on the ramparts of Ceuta; has it a more terrible effect than in the castle of Grenada?"

I was charmed with his bravery, and recovered confidence from his words. I lighted another torch, and followed to the place where we had seen this strange appearance. Almonzor stepped upon the stone, and moving from one side to the other, observed it was loose beneath his feet, but so exactly fitting to the others, that no hold was left to raise it.

The dagger, which I constantly carried about me, was formed with three sides, and peculiarly



strong. I insinuated the point between the stones, and raising it slowly till we got a firmer hold, we lifted it wholly on one side, and beheld beneath us not a skeleton or a grave, but a black and yawning gulf, into which the light of our torches scarce penetrated.

It now became necessary to reflect before we proceeded farther.

"It is certain," said Almonzor, "that there is some mystery involved in this business; and as certain that I will not quit this castle till I am satisfied. Fernando, dare you follow me?"

I smiled at this challenge. "If there is a mystery, and in this place," answered I, "no man has more obligation than myself to search into it—let me, therefore, first advance."

We refrained waking our servants, as we knew the bargemen kept watch without; and after examining to see if our pistols were properly loaded, we began to descend a narrow flight of steps, almost perpendicular, and built in the form of those leading up a circular tower.

So far they penetrate into the earth, that they seemed without end; and were the more perplexing as we could not see a yard before us. We frequently listened, but not the smallest noise reached us; and when we reflected on the singularity of the place, even Almonzor began to doubt whether the figure we had seen was human.

After descending at least three hundred steps in an almost perpendicular direction, we entered at once into the most beautiful grotto which fancy could paint. From the reflection of the two torches that we carried, a blaze of light burst upon us, which, for a moment, startled us, as though we had plunged into a region of fire.

Figure to yourself a prodigious dome, whose height was alone sufficiently grand to excite admiration; from thence depended stalactites of all the varied colors that glitter in the prism. The sides and natural columns, which swelled of different heights, were of the most beautiful spar, tinted with streams of gold; the ground was sprinkled with little pieces, as if strewed with a variety of gems.

The effect of this brilliant assemblage of crystalized forms had upon my mind is without description; and we stood for some time in pleasing astonishment and wonder, wholly forgetful of the cause which led us thither.

It appeared like the treasury of nature; where topazes clustered with emeralds, and amethysts mingled with beaming rubies, in various festoons and fancied wreathings. How infinitely less appeared now to my recollection the utmost splendor of the Celestial Saloon; that was elegantly beautiful—but this was magnificently sublime.

Our time did not permit us to remain long in this palace of jewels; we crossed to a passage which appeared on the opposite side. It was narrow, and had the appearance of having at least been enlarged by the chisel. Through this we passed about twenty paces, which led us to another descent of marble steps, conducting us into a place, which at once obliterated the splendors we had just beheld.

It was a large cavern; the walls of which were of black and polished marble, in which, as in a dark mirror, the torches gleamed with a melancholy reflection. In niches, on either side, were plain marble coffins, inscribed with Moorish characters, and containing the mouldering remains of deceased nobility. Death seemed here to repose in state and the folly of all human grandeur was impressed upon the mind, with a language morality can never teach, and devotion itself but feebly inspire.

We paused in solemn silence, as we looked round this mansion of departed grandeur. I seemed to shrink within myself; and a sigh escaped me at remembering that I—I, who stood musing on the fate of others, should, like them, be mingled with the dust.

Almonzor made similar reflections; he looked round this solemn mausoleum with reverence, and we forgot for a time our situation and pursuit.

From this state of sad reflections we were aroused by a distant sound of music, which floated along the arched vaulting of this wonderful place.

"I have heard," said I "a chorus of aerial spirits; and probably this is a symphony of subterranean beings."

Almonzor smiled, and we slowly advanced. We had not proceeded many yards from this asylum of death before we clearly distinguished that the sounds proceeded from an organ, accompanied in the *Te Deum* by a very fine voice, which in this far sounding cavity had an effect altogether singular.

"This is certainly enchantment," said I; "at least, we have nothing to fear; for were robbers the inhabitants of this extensive cavern, they would have little taste for the harmonizing sounds of music."

We proceeded with caution, that we might not interrupt the musician, and quickly found ourselves at the entrance of a spacious chamber, lighted with near a dozen lamps, and decorated in a style which struck us with surprise.

The furniture was that of ancient times; but what attracted our regard from the novelty of the place, was a lady, dressed in mourning robes, playing upon an organ, whose full tones had an effect astonishingly grand.

The flames of our torches could not be concealed. She suddenly ceased to play, and turning round, started up with surprise at the sight of two strangers.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Almonzor, "am I deceived? Do I see Lady Emira?"

"Lady Emira!" repeated I, struck with the faint resemblance this lady had to the picture in the Castle Montillo—"can it be possible?"

"Who," said she in a firm voice, "is it that remembers me? I think the voice has once been known to me, but time has rendered my memory treacherous. Why are you come? and how came you, cavaliers, into this place so distant from the knowledge of man?"

"Providence," answered I, "could alone have conducted us. This lady, is Almonzor, once the servant of Don Padilla."

Her countenance changed at the name.

"Are you then sent hither by Padilla?" said she, in a faltering voice. "I wonder indeed that he came not himself."

"No," replied I; "be under no apprehension from us. I am Fernando de Coello, your nephew."

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed she, giving way to tears. "I thank thee! Then I shall once more behold the light of the sun—once more breathe the pure air of the day, and again behold human beings."

"Assuredly so," said Almonzor. "You are at liberty from this hour—we will conduct and protect you. But how is it possible you could have resided in this place for more than twenty years? How do you procure sustenance? or is there some other outlet into the country?"

"There is some secret passage," returned she, "but where, I know not; Don Padilla always preserved it from our knowledge. Pedro, the old steward at the Castle of Montillo, and Teresa, my waiting-maid, have been the condemned companions of my imprisonment, for having, by accident, discovered that a wax figure was buried in my place, and that I lived a prisoner in the eastern chamber of Montillo Castle until it was convenient to convey me secretly to this cavern."

While Lady Emira yet spoke, Teresa entered, with a basket of preserved fruits and cakes. She was terrified at our presence, and was hurrying away, when the voice of her lady encouraged her to stay, by an assurance of safety, and inquiry after Pedro.

"He is not yet recovered from his fright," answered Teresa, trembling herself. "He was in hopes of discovering some passage out of this place, that we might not be starved by the neglect of Don Padilla's yearly visit. He had found a way, my lady, beyond the grotto, up a

long winding stair, which was finished by a trap-door, made of a large flat stone; this he raised with a great deal of difficulty, and immediately let it fall again, on the sight of a company of robbers, some sitting and some sleeping round a large fire upon the floor. He returned without staying to look behind him; and he was afraid of alarming your ladyship, till his own fright should be over."

I smiled at this tale of Teresa, which I explained; and desired that this venerable servant, whose silver hairs and snow-white beard had so alarmed me, might appear. Teresa soon brought him before us, and we became mutually acquainted—laughing at our various apprehensions.

"There seems nothing wanting," said Almonzor, "but light and liberty, to be perfectly accommodated. This is a subterranean palace."

"And that no mean one," said Lady Emira; "there are apartments which, if well lighted, would put out of countenance those upon the surface of the earth. The former kings of Grenada used frequently to reside in them during the heats of summer; but the fountains which then flowed, now only supply a small stream, and the records of its beauty have been long lost. All its magnificence, in my girlish days, had dwindled in description to tales of dungeons and vaults, where the greatest cruelties had been committed."

I inquired if she recollected that she had a daughter, and proposed that she should accompany us; fearing we might be missed by our company, who would be in consternation at our sudden departure.

She informed us, that Padilla had once or twice spoken of the elegant form of Virginia in his annual visits; and that the desire of seeing her daughter, was almost the only wish she had to revisit the world; for, strange as it might appear, what at first she had considered as the most cruel of imprisonments, long habit, if it had not endeared, had at least reconciled.

It required some degree of resolution to resolve at once upon leaving this habitation; and but for my impatience to depart, many hours would have been spent in preparation. So quickly had the time passed away during our researches, and first conversation on so strange a discovery, that the day was already dawned when we reached the chamber, where our friends remained as we had left them.

I awoke the ladies, and introduced them to this unexpected stranger; leaving till a future period an explanation, which must be mutually embarrassing, and would have produced inveterate rivalry, had not the object of contention long since forfeited all claims upon the heart of either.

We spent the greater part of that day in examining the curiosity of this wonderful cavern, which I judged to have been originally the work of the Goths, from the ornamental fretwork, cut in places in the living rock. But as we shall probably one day visit it together, I shall now pass over a further description.

Our train was, by this accession, considerably increased; and it became necessary, on our arrival at Grenada, to hire a whole house for our accommodation. My impatience to reach Madrid, where I learned Don Padilla was gone, obliged me to leave many arrangements to Almonzor; and it was not the least singular of my adventures, that I should arrive there at so critical a moment, and become the witness of an event so unfortunate.

Thus Fernando de Coello concluded his narrative; and the Marquis of Denia, after congratulating him on the issue of so singular a concatenation of incidents, adverted to the then posture of their affairs, the illness of Virginia, and the unhappy confinement of Antonio and Valedia.

The day had broke upon the long narrative of Fernando; and on inquiry, finding Virginia enjoyed a tranquilizing sleep, the two friends retired to take a necessary repose.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

Of have I heard, that grief softens the mind,  
And makes it fearful and degenerate;  
Think, therefore, on revenge, and cease to weep,  
But who can cease to weep and look on this?—*Shakespeare.*

As soon as the Marquis of Denia awoke, he sent for Raolo to inquire after Berenice; and was not a little surprised when that faithful servant entered, very much disturbed in his manner, and with a wildness in his countenance, which was not easily accounted for.

"What is the matter, Raolo," cried he. "Where is your charge? Sure you have not suffered her to escape?"

"St. Peter protect us!" replied Raolo, bowing. "She is gone, senor, where she will be rewarded for all her evil deeds."

"I am sorry for it," replied the marquis; "I had a thousand questions of importance to ask, which will now never be answered. Go, and bring me the picture which hangs about her neck."

"She has taken it with her," answered Raolo.

"Taken it with her!" repeated the marquis.

"Did you not say she was dead? You have been negligent on your post, Raolo, and let her escape."

"Her master came for her," said Raolo, looking fearfully around.

"How?" cried the marquis, starting up.

"Has Don Padilla been here? Did he dare? But no, that was impossible; he is safe in the Inquisition—that will not excuse you, Raolo. I charge you, on your fidelity, to inform me quickly, what has happened to Berenice? and how she was suffered to quit my house so strangely?"

"Strange enough it was!" replied Raolo.

"Poor wretch! I shall never forget the agony she was in while I live! I should have called you, senor, but you were locked in with his Excellency Fernando; and I knew brother soldiers love to relate old stories."

"Go straight forward without prosing," said the marquis; "you raise curiosity with trifles. I have not much time to spare."

"When that old witch was delivered over to my care," said Raolo, "I gave her a dry, comfortable suit of clothes, and some refreshment, and locked her up safe in the housekeeper's great room, that she might not escape to do any mischief in the night."

"Now," thought I to myself, 'my lord and his friend are talking about former times, over a good bottle of wine, and why should not I, their servant, be thinking them over by myself and a glass of Malaga?' So, your excellency, I sat down in my own room, intending to be ready if anything should be wanted. I was obliged to break off a long train of reflections on the jolly time when we lay in the camp, by a loud rap at the outer gate. 'Who can it be?' thought I, 'at so unseasonable an hour!'

"I waited for the porter to open the gate, but he was safe asleep; and just as I reached the hall the clock struck twelve. 'Very well,' said I to myself, 'this is a fine hour to expect entrance into a house like this—knock again.' Just as I pronounced these words, there was another rap at the gate. 'Diabola!' said I, 'they will disturb my lady and interrupt my master, so I'll see whether it's a ghost, or a traveler abroad at this hour.'

"'Who's there?' said I, through the grating.

"'I bear a message for a lady,' replied a gruff voice; 'I must speak to her.'

"'To who?' demanded I.

"'To Berenice,' replied the voice. 'I have a message of importance—open the gate!'

"I considered that he was but one, and that if he should attempt to be outrageous, I could easily bring upon him two cavaliers, who feared neither man nor devil, in an honorable way—so I opened the door. A black man immediately entered the hall. I trembled while I closed and bolted the gate.

"'Go,' said he, 'to Berenice; tell her I have a message to deliver, which she alone must hear.'

"He scowled at me with his fierce eyes as he

spoke, and I dared not disobey him, though I felt shocked at his presence.

"I ran to the housekeeper's room, and unlocking the door, found Berenice dressed in the clothes I had given her, and kneeling upon the ground with her face upon a chair.

"'Madam,' said I, 'here is a black man demands to speak with you.'

"'With me!' cried she, wildly starting up, while her eyes started so, she seemed going out of her senses.

"'Yes, with you,' answered I; 'shall I bring him up?'

"'Oh! no, no, no,' repeated she, agitated. 'Dear Raolo, I beseech you tell him I cannot come. How did he look?—was he angry?'

"'Yes,' replied I, 'he looked terrible. He is almost seven feet high, and looks as I never saw man look.'

"'I am lost, lost to eternity?' cried she, clasping her hands in despair. 'Oh! why did Fernando prevent my purpose! Tell him I will not—cannot come.'

"I went down, shuddering at the thought of again speaking to this fierce black; but when I delivered her refusal, he smiled with a malignity which made my heart beat in my breast.

"'If she will not come to me, I will go to her,' said he. 'Thinks she to elude my power?'

"He strode through the hall, as if he had been familiar in the house; went on to the housekeeper's room; while I followed in trembling apprehension, and so much taken up in what was passing, that I had no idea of calling for help."

"This is your best apology," said the marquis; "but proceed in your strange tale."

"Berenice lay upon the floor, with her face to the ground, and her hair flowing loose.

"'Rise!' said he in an imperious voice. 'Am not I thy master, thy lord and emperor, and darest thou, insignificant slave, disobey my command?'

"The poor wretch (for I pitied her, your excellency) started upon her feet; but so pale, so ghastly, and panting for breath, that I expected she would have died on the spot; and offered to bring her assistance.

"'Go,' cried that fearful savage, 'bring her a glass of the wine you were drinking when I knocked at the gate.'

"I hastened to do as he commanded; for his orders were not to be disputed, and my mind was in a whirl of confusion. I returned in less than a minute but there was not the smallest remains to be seen of either Berenice or the devil; for certainly it must have been him who fetched her away."

The marquis was not a little affected by this strange incident. He desired Raolo to keep what he had told him a secret. "It is a shocking event," said he, "and truly deplorable! Alas! what a transient and trifling gratification, any human being should incur so dreadful a calamity? Let this be to you a warning, Raolo; for though we do not form regular compact with the devil, we enlist under his standard, when, to gratify our passions, we stoop to vice."

The marquis, on inquiry, found that his new guests were risen, and, having warned Virginia, he introduced them to her chamber, without any detail. Virginia rejoiced at the sight of Fernando; but when Selina was presented as his wife, she heaved a sigh, and inquired after her sister, Almira. The general answer that they arrived at Madrid only the preceding evening, prevented further inquiry, and avoided suspicions.

"I shall leave you," said the marquis, at breakfast, "to the care of this your sister-in-law. Fernando and I have business in town of particular interest."

To Selina they left the task of making Virginia acquainted with a thousand incidents, and the chaise being in waiting they departed for Madrid.

They arrived without accident at Madrid, and, without alighting at the Palace de Denia, they drove forward to the quarter of the Inquisition. They were both disappointed and grieved at being refused admission; and the

porter had even the effrontery to deny that such persons were in the house. In vain they entreated and even offered a considerable bribe, to learn the health of their friends—the man was immovable; and, tormented with uncertainty, they drove to the palace of the marquis.

A messenger was immediately dispatched, requesting the presence of Count Potenza; from whom they hoped information and to gain advice.

"This unfortunate transaction," said that nobleman, "is involved in so many intricacies, that I very much fear it will not only go hard with Antonia, but that Valedia will be involved in his fate, as an accomplice in the murder of a nun within the holy precincts of a convent. I would even advise Fernando, for a time, to be absent himself, as the malice of Don Padilla will certainly accuse him; and for a man, who cannot swim, to plunge into a rapid stream is the height of madness."

"I thank you," said Fernando, "but having been a witness to part of this transaction, I am bound in honor to give my testimony. I will even appeal to be heard as a witness at the bar of this dread tribunal."

"As you choose," replied the count. "I would only observe to you, that it is not always justice can out-impudence crime. Truth and innocence are often abashed before the brazen stare of falsehood."

"But if I cannot speak to conviction," said Fernando, solemnly, "I will appeal to the dead. Such testimony, I believe, will be undisputed."

"They are a sort of witness I should not much depend upon," said the count; "but you know better than I."

The Marquis of Denia was irresolute. He justly feared the proceedings of a tribunal, from whose decrees there was no appeal; and yet he could not think of deserting his friend, when he knew that his own testimony would go far.

The Count Potenza took his leave, with proposing to make every inquiry of an acquaintance belonging to the Holy Office; but with very little expectation of information from a man, who was not only sworn to secrecy, but whose interest and life depended on his silence.

Fernando and the marquis, after the departure of the count, entered into a debate on the expedients they were next to adopt.

The consideration of Virginia and Selina, checked much of that ardor the marquis would otherwise have exerted. His power at court was great; and he considered that this mode of application might be effective, and at the same time prevent their being immediately involved in the same distress.

While the Marquis of Denia was warmly enforcing this advice, the door of the room was opened, and two persons, dressed in black habits of a particular form, entered without ceremony. The two gentlemen arose at this intrusion; but before they had time to speak, one of the strangers motioned them to silence.

"You, Marquis of Denia, and you, Fernando de Coello," said he, "are cited before the most Holy Office. Follow us in silence."

"First," said the marquis, "I would beg your permission to write a letter of material consequence, on which, perhaps, may depend the life of a lady."

"We cannot wait—our time is precious," said one of the officers. "Matters of moment call us hence."

"Will you, at least, tell me how my friend Antonio is?"

"I know him not," replied the man, dryly; "we answer no questions."

The marquis felt himself hurt at this abrupt treatment; but he knew that not the officers of the Inquisition only, but all petty instruments of public justice, abuse that justice; and, under that name, shield their own arrogance and tyranny. He therefore smiled at the petulance of the officer, and scarcely speaking to his friend, they entered the carriage, and proceeded in silence to the dread abode of absolute power.

They were conducted through the winding and dreary passages of this terrible habitation,



to separate cells; where they were denied all intercourse with every living being, except the mute who attended them with food.

The officers of the Inquisition prepared for the examination of their prisoners; and Don Padilla, being the father of the murdered lady, they proposed that he should be first called to the bar of their tribunal.

The stern countenance of the suprema, and harsh features of the secretaries and officers, was sufficient to terrify the guilty, and abash the innocent.

The usual solemnity was observed; and the large hall hung with black, and adorned with symbols of justice and terror, were calculated to strike the mind with fear.

Don Padilla took his seat at the end of a long table, opposite the chief judge. He cast his eyes around the hall, frowning deeply to conceal his inward agitation, and to collect firmness to resist, and to pursue his intention.

"Do I not read villain," said he to himself, "upon every countenance before me; and why should I hesitate giving the reins to my vengeance? Who so fit as these to execute my resolves?"

He was roused from the reflections he entered into during the solemn pause observed before the proceedings commenced, by one of the fathers commanding him to take the oath of secrecy and truth.

"Now," said the suprema, "you, Tavarro Padilla, relate to the court the incidents relative to your daughter's death; and remember, that we have inflexible means of searching to the bottom for the fact."

"Reverend and Holy Fathers," answered Padilla, with a profound inclination of his head, "I am not ignorant of the wisdom which governs your tribunal; and rejoice that I now have an opportunity of bringing forward a train of facts and grievances, which I humbly request you to note and to redress."

"I had two daughters, Reverend Fathers, who were the comfort of my age. The Marquis of Denia and Fernando de Coello endeavored to seduce their affections. I placed my daughter, Almira, in the convent of Dominican Nuns; which, being particularly under your patronage, I considered as the most sacred asylum from the attempts of profligacy. Business required my absence at Grenada; and, returning, I had the misfortune to find my daughter, Virginia, spirited away. I hastened to Madrid, in search of my daughter, when I was confounded with finding that, without waiting for the blessings of the church, she had taken up her abode with the Marquis of Denia. I heard, also, with just indignation, that the sacred walls of a convent were not sufficient to secure a daughter from seduction. I gained but too certain intelligence of my own dishonor; and that Antonio de los Velos, at the instigation of the Marquis of Denia, meditated sacrilege, in carrying away by force, my daughter Almira. I should instantly have employed the arm of public justice, had I not been restrained by fears for the reputation of my family; and I adopted a secondary mode in attempting prevention. With this design, I caused the nightly visits of Antonio to be watched."

"How long have you been in Madrid?" interrupted one of the Inquisitors. "Our information says, you arrived the day preceding this event."

Don Padilla concealed vexation under a smile, and, bowing, he continued: "That is most true, Reverend Father. I said, I caused those nightly visits to be watched, being informed of them on my arrival. My expression I conceive to be correct, though, regarding myself, it was the first night. I commanded my servant, Jacques, to traverse the precincts of the garden, and to bring me his observations; but, being unable to remain inactive at home, I went after him myself, to be a witness with my own eyes of the truth of the information I had received."

"I arrived at the garden wall about twelve. I could not perceive my servant, but I saw a

ladder raised against the wall, the purpose of which I could not doubt. All the injuries of wounded honor conspired to raise my resentment. I forgot, in the instant, that I was myself guilty of error in entering those sacred walls, and mounting the ladder, I descended into the garden. Judge, Holy Fathers, what was my horror, when I beheld by the light of a lantern, my daughter Almira bleeding upon the ground; Antonio de los Velos clothing himself in her sacred vestments, and a nun, named Valeria, wrapping the body of my daughter in the cloak of the marquis—for what purpose I am ignorant, unless for the better conveying her away undetected."

"It seems repugnant to reason," said the suprema, "that a lover should murder his mistress; that would be an instance of action unparalleled. Think well, Padilla, what you say; remember, we are not to be trifled with."

"Most true," replied Padilla; but if it be difficult to believe that a lover, when tired of the favors of his mistress, should thus rid himself of her—think it not less unnatural for a father to murder his own child?"

"Struck, as I have said, with horror at this tragedy, I flew back, in hopes my servant might be arrived. I beheld him at the bottom of the ladder, struggling with a stranger, whom, I afterwards learned, was Fernando de Coello, and who, having shot my servant Jacques through the head, as he was attempting to prevent his entering the garden, wounded me severely with the sword he had taken from Jacques as he fell, of which wound I am now extremely ill. The rest, Holy Fathers, is known to your officials, and I humbly hope you will not permit my wrongs to be undressed."

Here he remained silent, and his deposition being read, and signed by himself, he was remanded back to his dungeon.

After each of the superiors had commented upon his story, an official was dispatched to bring Antonia before them.

The Marquis de los Velos, dressed in the habit assigned him by the rules of the house, was conducted, almost unable to stand, between two officials into this awful hail of examination. His countenance was pale, and his eyes dim. His grief preyed heavy upon his soul, and he appeared now but the shadow of that young and vigorous nobleman he had been but a few weeks before.

After the usual oaths, the suprema called upon him to confess. "Recollect yourself," said he; "confess your crimes, and throw yourself upon the mercy of the Holy Office."

"I acknowledge," replied Antonia, in a low voice, "that I am most guilty; I have been the means of death to the most lovely of women."

"Then you confess," cried the suprema, rising from his seat with surprise in his countenance; "you confess yourself the murderer of the Lady Almira! You acknowledge your sacrilege! You have the effrontery to own your seduction of a nun dedicated to the veil!"

Antonia started as from a fearful dream.

"Great Judge of Mankind!" cried he, with something of frenzy, "now let the arm of justice strike upon the head of guilt! No, Holy Fathers, not with my own hand—not with my own will, was it possible! She was pure as the sacred walls where she dwelt—but my love has blasted her fame. She came to meet me, to reject my offered love; to tell me she had chosen Heaven for her husband; and by the barbarous hand of a monster she was struck dead in my arms. But I possess the power to blast that monster to the ground!"

"You rave, marquis," interrupted the suprema; while the others whispered amongst themselves, that grief had evidently touched his senses. Their curiosity was, however, roused by his last words; and one of them demanded what it was at which he hinted.

Antonia had had time for recollection. He was aware, that if he touched upon the suspicions of his friend Albert, it would involve him in the same misfortune; and of himself he possessed no proof. He suppressed, therefore, all the suggestions

of his indignation, simply relating his first interview, and subsequent haughty refusal from Don Padilla; who, to gratify his predominant taste for cruelty, had condemned his daughter to the habit.

The Inquisitors heard him with silence. His manner impressed them with his innocence regarding the death of Almira; but yet the malice of Don Padilla seemed unaccountable, and being interested in a circumstance so singular, they resolved not to rise from their seats till they had examined farther testimony; and making a signal for Antonio to be conducted away, they commanded Fernando before them.

Fernando, when he had first been conducted to his narrow cell, recollected over all the reports he had heard relative to the mystery and delay of this supreme tribunal. Weeks and months, he had heard, sometimes elapsed before the prisoner was called upon, that their minds might be bent to confusion; and he trembled when he thought on the consequences of such an absence from Selina, who, in a strange country, must give way to the most sinister apprehension at his sudden and unaccountable absence.

The mutes had served him once with the prison allowance, and he proposed on their next appearance to bribe them with a valuable ring to procure him immediate examination, little knowing that such an attempt would have been abortive, or only made use of against himself.

Such were his reflections, when he heard the bolts of the outer door withdrawn, the bar and chain taken from the inner, the door open, and two men, in the dismal habits of mutes, stand before him.

They seized him, one by each arm, and, without speaking, conducted him by various subterranean passages, lighted only by one glimmering lamp, which served to show the figures of his guides, whose sallow countenances and hollow eyes, seemed to characterize them asimps of torment in another world. Fernando secretly shuddered as they moved slowly forward; a sensation of awful sublimity seized his soul when he entered the extensive hall, where every object which met his eye wore the livery of death.

He perceived upon the table the dagger, which, with everything he had about his person, had been taken away on his first entrance, and now was placed before him as an evidence of presumptive guilt; these people well knowing by what minute incidents the mind is often led to betray its cooler purpose.

Fernando was not abashed by all this preparatory show. He took his seat firmly, and looked round him with confidence. His voice made no alteration in its tone, when called upon to witness what he knew relative to the death of Lady Almira, his own murder of Jacques, and the intended murder of Don Padilla.

"As to the death of Almira," said the suprema, in a careless way, "you need not dwell much upon it—Antonio has confessed himself guilty of that action."

"That is false!" said Fernando, with a start of indignation.

One of the Inquisitors rang a small bell, at which several mutes rushed in to seize the prisoner, and drag him to punishment, for insulting the Chief Inquisitor, but the suprema, more temperate, motioned them to retire; and Fernando, warned by the danger, and a knowledge that his life depended on the caprice of his judges, resolved to attend with silence, or answer with circumspection.

"Are you guilty," said the suprema, "of the murder of Jacques, the servant of Don Padilla?"

"I am," replied Fernando, calmly. "It was an act, which, in any other situation, I should have rejoiced at; but, as it served to rescue Padilla from death, by the hands of his own instrument in wickedness, I grieve that I did it."

"Do you know that your words are noted down?" said the suprema.

"It is for that reason that I am so plain," replied Fernando, bowing.



"You are a hardened criminal—you are familiar in blood," said one of the Inquisitors.

"I am familiar with the blood of the enemies of my country," replied Fernando. "I have also been familiar with the flowing of my own in that service." The Inquisitors looked at each other for a moment, then one of them inquired if Fernando was not related to Padilla.

"I am his next, and I believe only male relation," answered he; "and it is, therefore, that I am selected, by a higher power, to bring him to justice, for crimes greater than the unintentional murder of his own daughter—that originated in a mistake."

"Of what do you speak?" demanded the suprema. "Remember, you have taken a solemn oath."

"I remember it well," answered Fernando, "I am under a greater engagement than the pains of this court imposes. Holy Fathers, the accusation brought against myself is too trifling and too poorly malicious to merit your attention; but I here pledge myself to accuse Padilla to his face, of crimes such as he shall not deny."

"We do not permit of such modes of proceeding," answered one of the officers. "You must confess and accuse before us, and us alone."

"Never," replied Fernando, firmly. "What I should say, I shall not fear to speak before a thousand persons; but I cannot accuse a man behind his back—the rules of a camp have taught me otherwise."

"We have means of bending stouter spirits," observed one of the Inquisitors, with a malicious smile. "You have confessed that you know a secret, and that secret must be known to us. Whose is that dagger?"

"It belongs at present to me," replied Fernando. "How I came by it I shall inform you in presence of Don Padilla. It is a very singular one."

"It seems rusty," said the suprema, taking it up, and holding it raised between him and the tapers.

"It is, and how it came so, Padilla can best tell you," answered Fernando. "I accuse him, Reverend Fathers, of murder, and crimes worse than adultery—and that poniard shall witness."

"Holy Virgin!" cried the suprema, changing countenance as he looked on the dagger. (A drop of blood fell from it upon the ground.) "This is a solemn business; lead the prisoner hence."

This incident excited the greatest surprise; it was such as they had never before witnessed. They were dismayed; and Fernando being led away from the hall, his request was debated upon; and, considering his character and connections, with the strange omen they had beheld, they agreed to suspend the forms of office, and confront and confound the guilty party by the presence of the accuser, since all were prisoners alike and no new danger could arise from a knowledge of their enemies.

According to the custom of this tribunal, the prisoners were left in total darkness concerning every incident, except what passed immediately before their eyes, and they knew neither the day nor the hour which was again to subject them to examination. They had to dread every moment that arrived as that, which perhaps might sign their doom; a specious of torture, than which nothing short of corporeal suffering is greater.

## CHAPTER XXV.

Fancy enervates, while it soothes the heart,  
And, while it dazzles, wounds the mental sight;  
To joy each heightening charm it can impart,  
But wraps the hour of woe in tenfold night.  
And often, when no real ills affright,  
Its visionary fiends, in endless train,  
Assail with equal or superior might,  
And through the throbbing heart, and dizzy brain,  
And shivering nerves, shoot stings of more than mortal pain.—*Beattie's Minstrel.*

THE dead hour of midnight was judged most proper for the present singular examination; and that the ceremonial might be as impressive as possible, the antique and dismal hall, which

was a subterraneous building, and always hung with black, was now lighted with tapers of black wax, which shed a light that gave liberty to fancy to create what images it pleased, in the misty obscurity that every way hung around.

The mutes, whose habits were adapted close to the body, had little that could claim kindred with men in their appearance; and the suprema, with his brother and the secretaries, all habited in fantastic and black garments, adding to the expression of their unbending features, exhibited no faint sketch of what might be supposed an infernal tribunal.

To give the greater horror to the scene, the dead body of Almira, exposed on a bier, and covered only to the head with a white cloth, was placed immediately before the seat of the prisoners. Her features yet retained their loveliness, though the yellow finger of death had traced its mark on her cheeks.

The body of Jacques, already tainted with putrescence, was exposed on one side, covered with a black cloth; two large black tapers burning, the one at the feet, the other at the head.

Such was the solemn preparation of men, who were familiar with every mode of horror, and knew how to search the soul to its most latent feelings. The singular omen of the bleeding dagger had excited their interest, and they had spared no means their universal information gave them, to search the truth to the bottom.

Don Padilla, pale with his wound, and harassed by his own mind, was the first who took his seat before these awful judges. Clouds of blackness hung upon his brow, and sullen silence closed his lips. He knew that Jacques would not betray him; and he resolved, with obstinate firmness, to submit to every infliction rather than bend to a confession which must overwhelm him with infamy, and humble his haughty spirit to the dust.

Antonio and Fernando were seated on a bench facing Don Padilla; the one to accuse him of the murder of his daughter, the other of that of his friend; and the Marquis of Denia, who had not once been examined during the three days he had been a prisoner, was now placed on a seat by himself, in the utmost astonishment at this strange arrangement; and almost unable to command his feelings at the sight of the body of Almira, and the dejected Antonio, in whose face were more signs of death than life.

The suprema began with a long speech on their own mercy and justice, expatiating with dreadful precision on the means they possessed of forcing an unwilling avowal; then demanding of Padilla whether he yet refused to acknowledge himself guilty, which was only answered by a firm silence; he called upon Fernando to rise and substantiate the charge he had brought.

Fernando was encouraged by the unexpected presence of his friends. He remembered that he was now at that moment on which hinged the crises of his fate; and making a solemn appeal to Heaven for calmness to proceed in his undertaking, he began by relating the first interview he had with the wounded soldier in the defile; his subsequent adventures in the Castle of Montillo; the discovery of Lady Zidana; and the no less singular event of Lady Emira; concluding with his adventures on the night of his arrival in Madrid.

The Inquisitors listened in silence; not once interrupting the narration with a remark. The countenance of Padilla was so wrapped in gloom, that his emotions eluded observation; though he inwardly trembled at a relation, which called fresh before him incidents long past, and which he would willingly have buried forever.

"Reverend and Holy Father," said he, when Fernando ceased speaking, "you have heard a story so absurd, that were it written in a romance, old women and children would laugh at it. You have heard of a wandering ghost—of a man murdered twenty years since by robbers; and who now takes it into his

head to trouble the dream of this madman. You have been told a strange story of my wives, but there is nothing of proof."

"If I may have permission to speak," said the Marquis of Denia, "I would ask the prisoner a few questions, which may lead to the proof he desires."

"Proceed," said the officer, "you have permission."

"Whose dagger was that which now lays upon the table?" said the Marquis of Denia to Padilla.

"I know nothing of it," replied he; "why don't you ask my servant, who lays there murdered by your companion?"

A deep groan, which seemed to issue from the body of Jacques, for a moment silenced the whole company till the marquis, collecting himself, went on:

"If you, Don Padilla, do not answer, the dead will! When I was at the Castle of Montillo; when I narrowly escaped being murdered in my bed, by your tool of vengeance, that wretch who lays there a corpse, I pursued him by the pale beams of the moon, where I beheld a sight which shook all my firmness, and has not yet been erased from my memory."

The eye of Don Padilla eagerly fixed upon the face of the marquis, who, for a moment, remained silent, till he was commanded to proceed by the Chief Inquisitor.

"You know the chamber I allude to—I demand what were the objects that I beheld?"

"I am ignorant of all you allude to," replied Don Padilla, with evident uneasiness. "What do you say you beheld?"

"I saw," said the marquis, with a look of horror and as he spoke, the tapers which stood near the body of Jacques suddenly expired. The Inquisitors looked astonished, and the marquis, trembling, remained silent.

"Don Padilla," cried the suprema, in a harsh voice, "I command you instantly to say what that chamber contained."

"It is impossible for me to know, out of five hundred chambers, which the marquis should choose to pry into at the hour of midnight," answered Padilla.

"We must have recourse to stronger means," said an officer. "My lord, shall the rack be prepared? This obdurate man is not to be won upon by mercy."

"In a little time," said the suprema; "we have not yet finished our examination. You deny, Padilla, all knowledge of your wives?"

"I do," replied Padilla.

"Note that," said one of the Inquisitors: and now let the Marquis of Denia continue his questions."

"Who was it," said the marquis, "that pursued me with unrelenting violence to seek my life? Who had recourse to enchantment to deprive me of existence? Was it not you, Don Padilla, who prompted the murderer, Jacques, to assassinate me at noon-day?"

"I am totally ignorant of all you allude to," said Padilla; "were I guilty of this long catalogue of crimes, I should be the greatest monster in nature."

"That I aver to be true," said the marquis. "Did you not attempt the honor of your own daughter? Whose bones are those, that lay exposed on the banks of the river near your castle? You are silent. But now, Fernando, bring those proofs that shall confound the effrontery of guilt."

"First," said Fernando, "let Don Padilla approach the dead body of his daughter, lay his hand upon her cold and inanimate breast, and swear by Heaven, that he is innocent of her death."

Padilla sat still, his countenance changed to a livid paleness, and he cast a glance upon Fernando, which was meant to annihilate him.

"Rise, Padilla," cried the suprema, "take this dagger in one hand, advance to that murdered body, place your other hand upon the breast and swear by Heaven, that you are innocent."

Every eye was instantly fixed upon him; his changing countenance betrayed the working terrors of his mind. He arose, and grasping



the dagger with a desperate resolution advanced towards the bier. He suddenly paused—"Why?" said he, in accents that faltered strangely, "why should I be put to a test such as this? Were I the criminal my accusers would represent me, I should not shudder at so impious an appeal. Are the feelings of a father thus to be trifled with?"

"And are they the feelings of a father that agitate you, Padilla?" said the suprema. "Is it they which make you thus to tremble?"

"I tremble?" cried Padilla, fiercely. "Let the guilty tremble!"

"Proceed then—your appeal will be heard if you are innocent."

He advanced with a firm step, horror and desperation pictured on his brows. He stood a moment over the pallid corpse; then placing his hand upon the icy bosom, he attempted to speak, but shrunk back aghast and pale, for no sooner had his hand touched the body, than the wound bled afresh.

Profuse drops of sweat gathered on his brow, from the inward working of his soul; while horror spread its chilling powers over all who were present.

Padilla stood, during a long pause of silence, fixed, as though petrified to the spot; he seemed to forget all the cautions of prudence, and the resolution of his cooler reflections—till he was roused by the loud and angry voice of the suprema.

"Don Padilla," cried he, "we have seen in you, an instance of the most daring depravity; and your guilt is clearly manifest. We need no testimony as to the murder of Lady Almira; the poniard which effected that unfortunate event, is fitted to the sheath you had in your bosom when taken. Antonio is guilty, most guilty, and must be punished; but not for the death of your daughter. You have denied the knowledge of your wives—those ladies this moment are in Madrid. But you have asked for proof, and you shall have proof—proof that I trust will sink you with shame, hardened as you are with crime."

He made a signal to one of the secretaries, who rang a bell, and a distant door opened; through which entered two officials, with black wands, leading in a female, covered from her head to the ground in black. As she drew near, she threw back her veil, and the Marquis of Denia immediately recollected the fierce and masculine countenance of Berenice. He shuddered as she advanced. The wild rage of her eye appeared to him the same as when he beheld her perform the impious incantation in the bowels of the earth; and he secretly apprehended mischief from her presence. She bowed her head to the Vicar General and his officers; and, at their motion, took a seat with marks of profound humility.

"Berenice," said the suprema, solemnly, "I have called upon you, on this important occasion, as a witness against Don Padilla, whom, by your own confession, you are connected with in a train of vice the most infamous. You have thrown yourself voluntarily upon the justice of our office. You have accused yourself of sorcery and witchcraft. You have acknowledged tormenting the Marquis of Denia, by supernatural and diabolical enchantments. Now begin your first act of retribution, by an ample confession."

"Reverend Father," cried Fernando, "with your permission, I would ask this woman one question before she begins her confession."

"Is it of moment?" said the Inquisitor.

"It is of consequence to me," answered Fernando.

"Say on, then."

Fernando turned to Berenice. "Tell me," said he, "if you were ever nurse to a young lady; and what became of the lady?"

"I was nurse," replied she, "to a daughter of Count Ferendez. I sold her to a slave merchant, when circumstances obliged me to quit Tanis."

"I am satisfied," cried Fernando with pleasure on his countenance. "I have now not the shadow of a doubt remaining. That child is my wife, the only remaining offspring of the

injured Count Ferendez; and since the death of Almira, the only living daughter of Lady Zidana. Providence has so ordered, that she should have no disputant to her claim on her father's possession."

During this interrogation and reply, Don Padilla, had never once moved from the attitude his horror had imposed upon him. The entrance of Berenice, the partner of many a crime, deprived him, for a time, almost of recollection, but this information aroused the malice of his mind, and turning toward Fernando, he cried:

"Now, wretch! now thou thinkest that thy plans have succeeded—that thou shalt be happy? Thou hast delighted in the idea of my destruction; but now, now will I sting thee to the soul, and destroy, for the rest of thy days, every portion of tranquility! Behold the man you have destroyed—and in that man behold—your father!"

"Impossible!" cried Fernando, trembling, "my mother, indeed, was your sister—my father died before I was born—but it is impossible I should be your son."

"It is most true," cried Padilla, with a voice that echoed through the hall, "thou art my son, and that by my own sister; thou art the offspring of guilt; it was on thy account that I first fled my native country; it was thee the evil spirit of Count Ferendez selected, as his fittest instrument; and it is thou who hast brought thy father to the grave."

"Great Judge of Mankind!" cried Fernando, in agony, "can this be true? O! let me instantly die! Let me never more see the day!"

"What proof do you bring of an assertion like this?" cried the suprema, in amazement.

"We cannot believe so unnatural a crime, even in you."

"Have you not a little ivory box," said Don Padilla, "which you took from me on my first entering this place?"

"It is here," replied one of the secretaries; "it contains some trinkets."

"It contains also a secret spring," said Padilla; "I will open it."

"Hand it to him," said one of the Inquisitors.

Don Padilla took the box, and opening its secret partition, took out a small billet, which he handed to the Chief Inquisitor, who read these words:

"Horror seizes my blood, and overcomes my faculties, at the dreadful discovery you have made me! Was it then you, Tavarro, that I received unknowingly?—and have I been guilty of the most horrid of crimes? Fly, thou monster of depravity!—I give thee warning. For, if I live to rise from the bed I now lay upon, I will pursue thee! and the guiltless offspring of thy guilt shall cry for curses on thy head."

"No more, no more," cried Fernando, in agony, "I am a wretch and will not live!"

At these words he snatched from the table the dagger, which was yet red with the blood of Almira, and would have plunged it into his heart, had not the Marquis of Denia grasped him by the arm and powerfully withheld him.

Don Padillo smiled malice at this scene; his eye shot with triumph, and he called on Fernando, in a taunting voice, to strike.

The Inquisitors demanded silence and ordered the three friends to be conducted away, when Berenice, who had stood calmly during this ferment, cried with a loud voice, that before Fernando left the hall, she had something of the utmost consequence to disclose.

The suprema waved his hand that she should be heard; and commanded her to advance near the body of Almira.

"But a little time," said she, "and such an event as this would have given pleasure to the depravity of my mind, Reverend Fathers; this man, this Padillo, is not the father of Fernando."

Then, loosening from her neck the portrait of Padilla, she opened the spring, and taking thence the ring, she raised it to the view of Padilla.

"Know you this token?" cried she. "Do you not remember the occasion on which this was given? It was I who personated that sis-

ter, whom your vile inclination attempted to seduce. It was I who, finding your mind depraved as my own, accompanied you, in the habit of a page, to America, and was the companion of your excesses. 'Tis true, the lady, your sister, believed that you had deceived her, and that the little Fernando was the offspring of your villainy, her husband having been some time dead."

Don Padillo, who had attended to her words and saw the ring, which he perfectly remembered, raised his hand, which yet held the fatal dagger, to plunge it into her bosom; but her eye was too quick for his motion, and she darted from the blow. Padilla was wild with frenzy; he saw all his machinations recoil upon himself, and again raising his arm, he plunged the weapon into his own bosom—falling prostrate upon the dead body of his daughter.

Antonio and the Marquis of Denia raised him up, but his life ebbed fast away; and, uttering the most incoherent expressions of horror and frenzy, he expired.

The countenances of all present expressed their dismay, and it was long before any degree of tranquility was restored; but two mutes having removed the body, the examination of Berenice went on.

"It is necessary in this case," said the suprema, "that no doubt should remain, that may discompose the future tranquility of Fernando. It appears from your words, that his reputed father was dead a longer time before his birth, than the laws of nature required. Don Padilla, you say, was not his father—who then was?"

"The Marquis de los Velos," replied Berenice; "the father of Antonio, and the uncle of Valedia. It was he who took care of him on his mother's death; educated him, and carried his own secret to the grave."

"Are we then brothers?" cried Fernando, grasping the hand of Antonio: "but perhaps you will disdain me for my birth."

"Never!" cried Antonio, "you will not only be my brother, but very soon my heir; as I am certain I shall not live long."

"Courage, my friend," said the Marquis of Denia; "you are yet extremely young in life, and have yet much pleasure before you." Then turning to Berenice—"I would wish to know," said he, "by what means you became a sharer in all these secrets, which, I own, appear a little romantic?"

"I was," replied Berenice, "the companion of Fernando's mother, and early fell in love with her brother, Tavarro. The Lady Isabella was courted by the Marquis de los Velos, but her father obliged her to marry against her desire, and the marquis was banished the house. Her husband dying a few months after her marriage, the marquis again renewed his visits, and the Lady Isabella was privately married to him, before the time of customary mourning expired."

"I was secret to their intrigue, and frequently admitted De los Velos by a private door. Don Padilla was enamored of his sister; and ventured to disclose his passion to me, with a considerable bribe to admit him to her chamber. I confess that I deceived him, and admitted him to my own; and thus a double intrigue was veiled under the mystery of night. I bound Padilla over by such vows of secrecy, on his nocturnal visits, and threatened him so strongly with public vengeance, if he ever dropped to me the smallest hint during the day, that he was not likely to discover the secret. It was a letter, which he wrote in a fit of passion to his sister, which discovered to her what she believed to be her guilt; supposing that he had visited her in place of the marquis; and it was her answer, which you have read, that occasioned his flight."

"The Marquis de los Velos would have owned his marriage with Lady Isabella had she lived; but the fancied discovery of so dreadful a crime overcame her at once, and she had scarce life remaining to bring Fernando into being, the real date of whose birth was held a secret from the world, as his mother had been rarely visible since the death of her husband. The Marquis



de los Velos retained his own secret, and Fernando, in his house, received an asylum, and when of age an appointment in the army."

"Berenice," said the suprema, "Don Padilla being now dead, your confession cannot affect him, and we already know too many of his crimes to desire addition to the number. I charge you then, as you dread our vengeance, to answer the questions I shall ask. You have told us you have been guilty of witchcraft, that you have harassed the life of the Marquis of Denia; now explain to us the circumstances."

"First, my lord," interrupted one of the Inquisitors, "let the marquis say what objects they were he beheld in the chamber at the Castle of Montillo, and which a signal incident prevented his before declaring."

"It was myself," replied Berenice, looking round her with fear.

"You!" cried the marquis; "good heaven! did you devour human flesh, and prey upon the carcasses of dead men?"

The Inquisitors leaned forward with new expectation.

"No," she replied; "you beheld me in the midst of a diabolical preparation. I was at that time composing a powerful spell, which has since been exerted upon yourself, and undermined your health and your happiness, till it nearly reduced you to the grave. You saw me half naked and disfigured with blood. The body I was dividing was that of Lopez, which Jacques had torn from its grave, and which I was preparing over a slow fire, made of dead men's bones and ivy leaves. Your friend Fernando discovered me once in my search amongst the graves beneath the castle."

"It was I who called upon you from a grotto in the garden of Aranjuez; it was I who contrived means to fright you with a chemical inscription in your chamber; and I took no small pleasure in perceiving you waste away under the power of my charm. It was more from the love of mischief and depravity of soul, than any particular enmity I had against you, that I employed those powerful means, and brought infernal spirits to my aid."

"I commanded the demons of the air, the whirlwind and the blast; and but for your protecting angel, should have leveled all your possessions to the ground. You were present when I performed a grand incantation, and brought Lucifer himself before me. I knew that the schemes of Jacques would not succeed, though he pretended, by human means, to rival my power. My design was to have had you transported, together with myself, to the mouth of Mount Aetna; but your presence and prayers enraged the fiend and curbed his powers. He left me in anger, and believing you too far gone to recover and escape from my hands, I first intended to relieve Jacques, who, being wounded and half buried, would shortly have expired. Your escape, and the failure of my second incantation, filled my mind with dismay. I beheld that my skill was to be overcome by the sacred name of a Superior Being; and I began to think on my own situation, exposed as I was to the certain vengeance of an infernal fiend who knows no greater glory than in the seduction of a human creature."

"The compact I had engaged in would expire in the revolution of a few years. I looked back upon those which were passed, and asked myself if I had tasted that happiness I had flattered myself in the possession of such unlawful power and the gratification of every passion. My powers had never produced me good, and my passions had reduced my frame. I beheld the extent of my folly and my crimes, but I saw no way of escape but by breaking my engagements, which I shuddered to do, as the penalty drove me to distraction."

Here Berenice remained silent and agitated, till she was again aroused by the suprema, demanding what penalty she had bound herself to abide by.

"My engagements," replied she, "allowed but one means of being cancelled, and that was terrible to my mind. Satan, in his compact, had bound himself in certain instances to my will; and my soul became subject to his empire, pro-

vided he did not suffer me to die by the hands of justice."

"My returning inclination to virtue was too feeble to combat the terrible idea of throwing myself upon this expedient. I shuddered at the thought of a public and a sudden death, and my mind was involved in a chaos of confused and varying images. Sometimes I feared that were I to break my engagements, and die by the hands of the executioner, my crimes were too great to be pardoned, and I should only abridge myself of the few short years which yet remained. At others, I thought of becoming a member of a convent, and, by penitence and prayer, interceding with heaven for mercy; but how could a wretch like me expect mercy? or what prayers could atone for my crimes?"

"Agitated and harassed by thoughts like these, and beholding no means of relief, I gave away to despondence, and in a fit of despair, plunged myself into the river; in the determined purpose of learning my future fate, in a faint hope of being lost in eternal oblivion."

"Fernando rescued me from the waves; and the house of the Marquis of Denia received me. It was there, for the first time, I ventured to raise my mind towards heaven, and to search for examples of its goodness and mercy. Examples innumerable crowded upon me, and a ray of hope darted through the darkness of my soul. 'I will rise,' said I to myself, 'and go to the house of my father, if he will but make me as one of his hired servants.'"

"I was interrupted in these meditations by the entrance of Raolo, the marquis's servant, who informed me that a black man desired to speak with me. The hour of the night, the description of the person, but too well agreed. This was the form the roaming fiend was to take when he should pay me his final visit, and claim me as his own. The time of our engagement had years yet to run; but what are promises, what are compacts with the prince of deceit, and the father of lies? No sooner were we left by Raolo, than, touching me with his hand, I became enshrouded in a veil of invisibility; and he conducted me in a few moments to that spot on the bank of the river where I had on the preceding day resolved on suicide."

"Weak and insignificant reptile," cried he, 'didst thou think by prayers, and penitence, and tears, to invoke indignant heaven to thine aid? Didst thou not, on this spot, meditate murder, and that on thyself? How was justice satisfied by a new act of outrage? an act which gave thee more fully to my power, and would ere this have plunged thee into the eternal gulf of woe. Prepare thee, for thou hast ante-dated by this deed our compact, and from this spot thou never shall depart with life.'"

"I was not altogether abashed by this terrible sentence. I had been familiar with horror, and more than once beheld fiends of various and disgusting forms—fiends, in whose features were forever impressed the marks of unchecked passions, and the stings of never-ceasing conscience."

"What is that you say?" said I, calmly. "Think you to deceive me, while you are only deceiving yourself? Knowest thou not, that my destruction by thy hands, will release me from my engagement? It will be retribution to society in part, if I fall by that power which prompted me to err. Rememberest thou not, that thy compact is cancelled if I die a violent death."

"His eyes became red with anger. 'How,' cried he, in a voice which shook the branches of the forest, 'dare you stand to reason with me? I, who am prince of the air, can sink thee to non-existence in a moment! Do I not ride on the wings of the whirlwind; and shall I stand reasoning with thee? Hast thou not witnessed my power, and beheld me grasp the subtle lightning in my hand? Hast thou not seen me enveloped in flames, and yet live? Yea thou darest to parley with me! Fall down at my feet and adore me, and all the pleasures of life shall be thine.'"

"I remembered in my own mind, the powers of a superior name in the cavern of my

incantations where the marquis escaped my wrath—a name which men ought to tremble to pronounce—I collected my fleeting spirits, and starting a few paces from his lifted arm:

"'Boaster,' cried I, 'thou vauntest of thy powers, but they are thine only as a permitted instrument of Almighty wrath! In His name, who makest the mountains to tremble, and the waters of the deep to pant, I conjure thee to go hence, thou fiend of darkness and deceit!'

"No sooner had I uttered these tremendous words, than a fearful burst of thunder shook the forest; the earth shuddered beneath my feet; the waves of the river were agitated; and the bending trees seemed parting by the roots."

"The form of the fiend became changed. I beheld before me a hideous misshapen serpent, of enormous length, covered with black scales. He fled from my tortured sight, uttering a loud and continued hiss, which seemed to pierce through all nature with horror; my soul melted within me, and I sank insensible upon the ground."

"When I recovered, my first resolution was to deliver myself up to public justice, in the faint and distant hope of future mercy. I hastened immediately to Madrid, and put myself into your power. Holy Fathers, I have now only to request that I may suffer the judgment due to my crimes, and which, however dreadful, I implore, as the only means of my safety hereafter."

Here Berenice ceased her dreadful narrative. She was pale as the corpse of Almira; nor were the Inquisitors, hardened as they were to scenes of misery and distress, unaffected by this conclusion. A general silence reigned for some time in this awful place. The series of dark events, which had been revealed, supplied sufficient matter for reflection; and the dead bodies before them affected the soul in its most vulnerable part; and, without comment, inspired a profound sense of the dispensations of Heaven, and the insignificance of human nature."

At length the suprema arose, and making the sign of the cross, he began:

"The events which have this night taken place, are the most singular in the annals of this institution. Providence has discovered events, which human knowledge never would have brought to light. A long chain of circumstances have been wound up to a crisis, and the guilty led to receive the reward of their crimes. But one circumstance remains unexplained, and that relates to Fernando, whose connection with the wandering spirit of Count Ferendez seems not yet dissolved."

"It is a small favor," interrupted Berenice, "I am permitted to perform, in retribution for unnumbered ills. That unhappy phantom will ever pursue Fernando, till he shall be pacified. He ever attends him visible, and at this moment sits at the foot of the corpse of Almira."

The Inquisitors and the prisoners shuddered and turned their eyes towards the spot; they could see nothing except the pale body of the murdered maid."

"Do not amuse us with falsehoods," said the suprema; "if what you say be truth, why is he not visible also to us?"

"Your eyes," replied Berenice, "are not like mine, cleared from the gross films of materiality—it is a qualification which I have dearly purchased. If you will, in the name of the Church, absolve me from guilt, I will command this unhappy spirit to become visible, and say what are his particular desires, and how he shall be tranquilized in the grave; then shall Fernando enjoy that uninterrupted repose he so well merits."

"You are so commanded," said the suprema; "provided there be no profanation of sacred things in the ceremony."

Berenice bowed, and the Inquisitors prepared themselves to witness what human eyes have so rarely seen, and which is, for the wisest of purposes, concealed from general observance. What, indeed, would be the situation of mankind, if all the spirits of the air



could hold visible communication, and connect themselves to tangible forms?

The three friends awaited in fearful expectation the motions of this extraordinary woman; who, taking a crucifix which stood upon the table, retired a few paces from the circle of the company, and muttering to herself some unknown words, remained silent, gazing earnestly through the thick gloom which hung round the walls of this subterranean vault.

The company were so profoundly silent, that a breath might have been heard; and, in a few moments, a dark shadowy form was seen to advance, with a solemn step, from the obscurity towards Berenice.

The Marquis and Fernando, though prepared, started up with an involuntary motion of terror, at again beholding a shade so familiar to their eyes; but the benumbing presence of the specter fixed them again to their seats, nor had any of the company power to move.

It advanced to the corpse of Almira, where it remained stationary. Its eyes were without motion, and its livid cheeks characterized decay. Its lips were pale and bloodless, and the skin upon its hand seemed drawn tight upon the bones.

Horror ran through the frame of all who dared fix their eyes upon this unhappy spirit; and Berenice alone retained any presence of mind.

"Why," cried she, extending the crucifix towards it, "why is it that you trouble the peace of the living?"

No motion was visible on its lips. A hollow voice replied, as from its breast:

"From the heir of my destroyer I have received retribution; let him bury my bones, which lie at the entrance of a ruined aqueduct; let him offer up mass for my tired soul; then shall I repose, and my only daughter be his reward."

"Say," said Berenice, "why wert thou condemned to wander?—since all who die by violence are not thus necessitated."

"Shall the purposes of eternity be revealed to mortal man?" replied the spirit. "Think you, Berenice, that I could ever have been the intimate, the associate of Don Padilla, and be innocent? Seek not then to pry into the councils of Heaven."

It remained silent; and Berenice demanded of the suprema, if she should ask any more questions. That judge had no power to speak; wonder had wrapped up the purposes of his soul, and spread unknown feelings through his mind.

"Go hence!" cried Berenice to the spirit, waving the cross in the air, with a motion of command. "Let the will of Heaven be obeyed."

The form of the spirit melted away. No sound was heard at its retreat, and the recovery of the company from a state of suspended animation, bespoke its final departure.

The Inquisitors made no remarks before the prisoners; astonishment sufficient was impressed upon their features. After a pause of some minutes, the suprema arose, saying: "Marquis of Denia and Fernando de Coello, you are at liberty, and shall be conducted hence."

At this signal, the mutes, who had entered with Berenice, advanced to lead them from the hall, but the Marquis of Denia, bowing, requested permission to speak. The vicar general nodded, and he went on:

"My lords, what I would say is in extenuation of the crimes of Antonio and Valedia, both of them persons of family and distinction; and, however guilty they may appear, that guilt must certainly be diminished when you reflect, Reverend Fathers, not on the passions of youth—these can be no excuse for crimes—but upon the supernatural events which you have witnessed, and which were so materially connected with the unfortunate transaction. I am well convinced no punishment you could inflict upon Antonio could equal what he now suffers, and the death of Almira will never quit his memory during life. Valedia is of that sex which claims compassion in its weakness."

"I have heard your arguments," replied the suprema. "We ever attend to any circumstance that can be favorable to the guilty; but were vice permitted to act with impunity under any circumstances, it would be encouragement and precedent for new crimes. 'Tis true, Antonio had not effected his purpose, Almira not being taken from the gardens, and, therefore, we spare his life; but he must pay a fine which we shall appoint; and Valedia must perform a penance, such as shall be the pleasure of the lady abbess of the Dominican Nuns."

"The body of Almira shall be delivered to you, Fernando; it will be your duty to inter it, and the remains of count Ferendez."

The suprema then made a motion that they should be led away. Antonio to his cell, and the marquis and Fernando to receive their clothes and other articles before they entered again into the world.

Berenice remained alone in the hall with the officers; to satisfy whose curiosity she underwent another examination on the nature of spirits and departed souls; but this examination was conducted with such profound secrecy, that the circumstances never transpired. The crimes of this wretched woman were of such a nature that they could not be forgiven by man; and some of them having flagrantly outraged all the laws of society, of moral establishment, and religious ordinance, she was sentenced to solitary confinement in one of the cells of the Inquisition for a year and a day, that she might have time to repent before she terminated a life of crime at the public *Auto da fe*.

#### CHAPTER XXVI.

And yet, alas! the real ills of life  
Claim the full vigor of a mind prepared—  
Prepared for patient, long, laborious strife;  
Its guide experience, and truth its guard.  
We fare on earth as other men have fared,  
Were they successful? Let us not despair—  
Was disappointment oft their sole reward?  
Yet shall their tale instruct, if it declare,  
How they have borne the load ourselves are  
doomed to bear.—*Beattie's Minstrel.*

WHEN the marquis and his friend Fernando quitted the prison, the morning sun just began to gild the spires of Madrid. The freshness of the air, and the brightness of day, made them fancy themselves arisen from a sepulcher, whose dreary and fearful images flitted through their minds, and seemed to add a zest to their present existence.

They hastened to find Lady Emira and Zidana, whose arrival they had learned, in a place where they had least expectation of such information; and they admired the universal intelligence this tremendous tribunal possessed.

They learned, on inquiry, that Almonzor had conducted them to the marquis's country house, where all was confusion and alarm. The sudden disappearance of these noblemen almost reduced the ladies to despair; and their joy at again meeting was equal to their late grief.

The marquis and his friend remained studiously silent upon the events of the Inquisition, waiting for the liberation of Antonio and Valedia, before they should communicate the eventful story, which would wound the breast of Virginia with grief at the miserable death of her beloved sister, and impress the whole group with a mixture of horror and astonishment at the singular fate of Don Padilla, who had died as he lived, in the midst of crimes.

It was not many days before Antonio was liberated and joined their society; but his loss, and the manner of that loss, dwelt heavy upon his mind, and unfitted him for company, and the satisfaction of his friends. The image of Almira constantly haunted his imagination, and his friends feared as much for his life as for his health. The first subject which made any impression upon him, and aroused the dormant faculties of his mind, was intelligence that Valedia was condemned to the veil, for the part she had taken, and without which Almira could never have been seduced from her duty.

He recollected with horror, that it was purely to oblige him she had first entered herself as a boarder; and the sacrifice she was to perform,

appeared in his eyes, equal to death, and determined him again to hazard, and even to die, rather than permit that she should become a victim to his misfortune.

Fernando was impatient to perform the last rites to the decaying remains of Count Ferendez; and the marquis being unwilling again to quit the company of Virginia, he departed with Almonzor and the two ladies; carrying with him, in sad procession, the body of Almira, which was attended by Selina, with all the affection of a sister.

Fernando took possession of the Castle of Montillo; he instated the wives of Don Padilla in different apartments, at their choice; and collecting the bones of Count Ferendez, he celebrated his obsequies with magnificence.

The coffin of Almira was placed by the side of that of the count, in the vaults beneath the Castle of Montillo; and Fernando could not avoid shuddering, as he cast his eyes around that dreary range of mildewed chambers, where he had once followed the specter of the man, whose ashes now were laid in funeral array, and for the repose of whose soul, mass was being chanted in the chapel of the castle, and at the cathedral church at Grenada. A monk from a neighboring convent officiated; after which ceremony, the chambers of the eastern wing were opened, and the office of exorcism performed, to satisfy the superstition of the servants, who otherwise would not enter that range of buildings.

Fernando, undisturbed in the happy possession of such a charming bride, did not remain long absent from his friends; the marquis, whom he found happy in the prospect of Virginia's speedy convalescence; and Antonio, whom he found miserable, in the prospect of Valedia's being condemned to take the veil.

The ceremony, which is usually celebrated with great pomp, was to be performed in the church of the Dominican Nuns; nor were all the intercessions of Valedia's friends able to bend the determined will of the provoked abbess; who considered, as a point of honor, the establishment of her own power, in superiority to the interests and intercessions of some of the most noble families in Madrid. The usual time was abridged, and two months after the death of Almira, Valedia was to perform her unwilling vows. Vows which the frailness of human nature is seldom enabled to keep without regret, and which the most superstitious enthusiasm must have at first invented.

Antonio, as the time approached, became nearly distracted. He forgot Almira, in his grief for Valedia, nor could the advice of his friends the least console him. He determined to witness the tragical sacrifice himself, since he found the impossibility of averting it, and vowed that as soon as she should have pronounced her obligations, he would shut himself up in a monastery, and take the habit of a monk. Reason had no power to move his determination, and his friends prepared their minds for some unforeseen catastrophe. The day arrived; and early as the doors of the church were opened, the three friends took their stations, agitated by a thousand alarms.

The crowd in the church was great, for rumor had been busy in reporting that a lady, torn from her lover, was that day to bid adieu to the world; and every eye which turned upon Antonio, did not hesitate to believe that he was the unfortunate man; and a thousand whispers ran through the building, on the cruelty of wounding so amiable a nobleman.

But when Valedia, clad in the simple habit of the house, entered with a steady composure and dignified air, when her beauty appeared unadorned, and in all the sweetness of modesty, a universal murmur of discontent broke forth; and had not a strong brass railing parted the populace from the nuns, violence might have been apprehended from their indiscreet piety.

Antonio gazed upon the solemn ceremony with a fixed and calm despair, which was partly excited by the determined composure of Valedia; and his friends hoped that her apparent



tranquility would reconcile him to the transaction.

The priests, in glittering attire, chanted their hymns, and the nuns seemed ready to embrace a new sister; when it became the part of Valedia, by a verbal concession, to adopt a life of penitence and prayer.

She moved calmly forward towards the officiating priest, who was the Archbishop of Madrid, and, making an obeisance with reverence, she raised her voice that it might be distinctly heard; while Antonio, unable to behold this final and irrevocable deed, closed his eyes and leaned upon the arm of the Marquis.

"I protest," cried Valedia, "in the name of the ever blessed and glorious Virgin, conceived without sin, that I cannot voluntarily accept the vows; that I am unfitting for the holy character of a nun; and that I am compelled thus publicly to speak, that my actions may be publicly judged, and not buried within the silent, solitary walls of this place!"

A universal cry of astonishment ran through the church. The lady abbess and the nuns were involved in confusion; and the archbishop, who was a man in years, and of irreproachable character, was obliged to pledge his word to the people that he would himself examine into the affair; or their murmurs might have produced unpleasant consequences.

At so sudden and unexpected an event, Antonio was no longer master of his feelings. He conjured the bishop not to pronounce a final sentence till he should calmly have heard from his own mouth the whole chain of events which had led to this singular incident; and it was with difficulty the marquis and Fernando dragged him by absolute force from the church, where, in his first transport, he would have related to the spectators the private history of those events which have been detailed.

Fernando conducted Antonio to his own palace; while the marquis waited upon the archbishop, with whom he made use of such powerful arguments, that he obtained his favor and friendship; and, insinuating that a considerable sum should be bestowed upon the foundation, he hoped to soften the abbess, whose heart was not insensible to the accumulation of wealth, upon her house; well knowing that wealth is the foundation of honor.

The marquis, on his return, spoke seriously to Antonio; endeavoring to discover if any portion of love entered into his anxiety for the fate of Valedia; and was not a little astonished at his reply.

"I know," said he, "that I have injured my cousin. Her goodness in attempting so hazardous an expedient, roused my admiration; her failure and suffering for my sake, exhibited my gratitude; and the painful uncertainty I labored under, has attached me to her by a stronger tie. We have both been unfortunate in our first passion. Fernando was educated with her at my father's country house; she has confessed to me her love for him, but he is married to another. Almira is lost to me forever; and I know not another lady in Madrid, with whom I would more willingly engage my hand and esteem—and perhaps time and habit may produce mutual affection."

The marquis was pleased with these prudent reflections; which showed him, that, notwithstanding his grief, Antonio had made solid observations, and he no longer feared for his understanding or health. He employed all the power of his connections at court; which, with the good offices of the archbishop, after many delays and many difficulties, restored Valedia again to her friends.

During the period this affair had been in agitation, Virginia had wholly recovered, and the day was fixed for the marriage of the marquis. A day which Antonio, who was naturally impatient, could not permit to pass, without exerting all his persuasion to gain Valedia, not only to accompany her new friend to the altar, but there to pledge her fate with his.

The united arguments of all her friends obliged her to acquiesce; and the Marquis of Denia, who ever considered those around him

as much as himself, made his faithful servant, Raolo, who had grown from a boy in his service, happy in the promised hand of little Martha, who had been sent for to attend on Virginia.

Thus happiness at length crowned the virtues and difficulties of the three friends, and united them, as well in the hands of concord as in the ties of relative affection.

Thus shall virtue, when pursued without deviation, triumph over vice; or, if it apparently fails in worldly prosperity, it will ensure to the mind of its possessor that tranquility and peace, which power cannot give, and which possessions cannot bestow.

THE END.

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